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'I SAY NO:'

Or, the Robe-Ketter Answered.

By WILKIE COLLINS.*

BOOK THE THIRD.

The Disobey.

CHAPTER XL.

CONSULTING.

OUT of the music-room, and away from his violin, the sound side of Mr. Wyvil's character was free to assert itself. In his public and in his private capacity, he was an eminently sensible man.

As a member of parliament, he set an example which might have been followed with advantage by many of his colleagues. In the first place, he abstained from hastening the downfall of representative institutions by asking questions and making speeches. In the second place, he was able to distinguish between the duty that he owed to his party, and the duty that he owed to his country. When the Legislature acted politically—that is to say, when it dealt with foreign complications, or electoral reforms—he followed his leader. When the Legislature acted socially—that is to say, for the good of the people—he followed his conscience. On the last occasion when the great Russian bugbear provoked a divi-

sion, he voted submissively with his Conservative allies. But, when the question of opening museums and picture-galleries on Sundays arrayed the two parties in hostile camps, he broke into open mutiny, and went over to the Liberals. He consented to help in preventing an extension of the franchise; but he refused to be concerned in obstructing the repeal of taxes on knowledge. 'I am doubtful in the first case,' he said, 'but I am sure, in the second.' He was asked for an explanation: 'Doubtful of what? and sure of what?' To the astonishment of his leader, he answered: 'The benefit to the people.' The same sound sense appeared in the transactions of his private life. Lazy and dishonest servants found that the gentlest of masters had a side to his character which took them by surprise. And on certain occasions in the experience of Cecilia and her sister, the most indulgent of fathers proved to be as capable of saying No, as the sternest tyrant who ever ruled a fire-side.

Called into council by his

* *The Right of Translation is Reserved.*

daughter and his guest, Mr. Wyvil assisted them by advice which was equally wise and kind—but which afterwards led, under the perverse influence of circumstances, to deplorable results.

The letter to Emily which Cecilia had recommended to her father's consideration, had come from Netherwoods, and had been written by Alban Morris.

He assured Emily that he had only decided on writing to her, after some hesitation, in the hope of serving interests which he did not himself understand, but which might prove to be interests worthy of consideration, nevertheless. Having stated his motive in these terms, he proceeded to relate what had passed between Miss Jethro and himself—concealing, for obvious reasons, the farewell words in which she had so strangely alluded to the memory of Emily's father. On the subject of Francine, Alban only ventured to add that she had not produced a favourable impression on him, and that he could not think her likely, on further experience, to prove a desirable friend.

On the last leaf were added some lines, which Emily was at no loss how to answer. She had folded back the page, so that no eyes but her own should see how the poor drawing-master finished his letter;—'I wish you all possible happiness, my dear, among your new friends; but don't forget the old friend who thinks of you, and dreams of you, and longs to see you again. The little world I live in is a dreary world, Emily, in your absence. Will you write to me now and then, and encourage me to hope.'

Mr. Wyvil smiled, as he looked at the folded page, which hid the signature.

'I suppose I may take it for granted,' he said slyly, 'that this

gentleman really has your interests at heart? May I know who he is?'

Emily answered the last question readily enough. Mr. Wyvil went on with his inquiries. 'About the mysterious lady, with the strange name,' he proceeded—'do you know anything of her?'

Emily related what she knew; without revealing the true reason for Miss Jethro's departure from Netherwoods. In after years, it was one of her most treasured remembrances, that he had kept secret the melancholy confession which had startled her, on the last night of her life at school.

Mr. Wyvil looked at Alban's letter again. 'Do you know how Miss Jethro became acquainted with Mr. Mirabel?' he asked.

'I didn't even know that they were acquainted.'

'Do you think it likely—if Mr. Morris had been talking to you instead of writing to you—that he might have said more than he has said in his letter?'

Cecilia had hitherto remained a model of discretion. Seeing Emily hesitate, temptation overcame her. 'Not a doubt of it, Papa!' she declared confidently.

'Is Cecilia right?' Mr. Wyvil inquired.

Reminded in this way of her influence over Alban, Emily could only make one honest reply. She admitted that Cecilia was right.

Mr. Wyvil thereupon advised her not to express any opinion, until she was in a better position to judge for herself. 'When you write to Mr. Morris,' he continued, 'say that you will wait to tell him what you think of Miss Jethro, until you see him again.'

'I have no prospect at present of seeing him again,' Emily said.

'You can see Mr. Morris whenever it suits him to come here,' Mr. Wyvil replied. 'I will write

and ask him to visit us, and you can enclose the invitation in your letter.'

'O, Mr. Wyvil, how good of you !'

'O, Papa, the very thing I was going to ask you to do !'

The excellent master of Monksmoor looked unaffectedly surprised. 'What are you two young ladies making a fuss about ?' he said. 'Mr. Morris is a gentleman by profession ; and—may I venture to say it, Miss Emily ?—a valued friend of yours as well. Who has a better claim to be one of my guests ?'

Cecilia stopped her father as he was about to leave the room. 'I suppose we mustn't ask Mr. Mirabel what he knows of Miss Jethro ?' she said.

'My dear, what can you be thinking of ? What right have we to question Mr. Mirabel about Miss Jethro ?'

'It's so very unsatisfactory, Papa. There must be some reason why Emily and Mr. Mirabel ought not to meet—or why should Miss Jethro have been so very earnest about it ?'

'Miss Jethro doesn't intend us to know why, Cecilia. It will perhaps come out in time. Wait for time.'

Left together, the girls discussed the course which Alban would probably take, on receiving Mr. Wyvil's invitation.

'He will only be too glad,' Cecilia asserted, 'to have the opportunity of seeing you again.'

'I doubt whether he will care about seeing me again, among strangers,' Emily replied. 'And you forget that there are obstacles in his way. How is he to leave his class ?'

'Quite easily ! His class doesn't meet on the Saturday half-holiday. He can be here, if he starts early, in time for luncheon ; and

he can stay till Monday or Tuesday.'

'Who is to take his place at the school ?'

'Miss Ladd, to be sure—if you make a point of it. Write to her, as well as to Mr. Morris.'

The letters being written—and the order having been given to prepare a room for the expected guest—Emily and Cecilia returned to the drawing-room. They found the elders of the party variously engaged—the men with newspapers, and the ladies with work. Entering the conservatory next, they discovered Cecilia's sister languishing among the flowers in an easy-chair. Constitutional laziness, in some young ladies, assumes an invalid character, and presents the interesting spectacle of perpetual convalescence. The doctor declared that the baths at St. Moritz had cured Miss Julia. Miss Julia declined to agree with the doctor.

'Come into the garden, with Emily and me,' Cecilia said.

'Emily and you don't know what it is to be ill,' Julia answered.

The two girls left her, and joined the young people who were amusing themselves in the garden. Francine had taken possession of Mirabel, and had condemned him to hard labour in swinging her. He made an attempt to get away when Emily and Cecilia approached, and was peremptorily recalled to his duty. 'Higher !' cried Miss de Sor, in her hardest tones of authority. 'I want to swing higher than anybody else !' Mirabel submitted with gentleman-like resignation, and was rewarded by tender encouragement expressed in a look.

'Do you see that ?' Cecilia whispered. 'He knows how rich she is—I wonder whether he will marry her.'

Emily smiled. 'I doubt it,

while he is in this house,' she said. 'You are as rich as Francine—and don't forget that you have other attractions as well.'

Cecilia shook her head. 'Mr. Mirabel is very nice,' she admitted; 'but I wouldn't marry him. Would you?'

Emily secretly compared Alban with Mirabel. 'Not for the world!' she answered.

The next day was the day of Mirabel's departure. His admirers among the ladies followed him out to the door, at which Mr. Wyvil's carriage was waiting. Francine threw a nosegay after the departing guest as he got in. 'Mind you come back to us on Monday!' she said. Mirabel bowed and thanked her; but his last look was for Emily, standing apart from the others at the top of the steps. Francine said nothing. Her lips closed convulsively—she turned suddenly pale.

CHAPTER XLI.

SPEECHIFYING.

On the Monday, a ploughboy from Vale Regis arrived at Monksmoor.

In respect of himself, he was a person beneath notice. In respect of his errand, he was sufficiently important to cast a gloom over the household. The faithless Mirabel had broken his engagement, and the ploughboy was the herald of misfortune who brought his apology. To his great disappointment (he wrote) he was detained by the affairs of his parish. He could only trust to Mr. Wyvil's indulgence to excuse him, and to communicate his sincere sense of regret (on scented note-paper) to the ladies.

Everybody believed in the affairs of the parish—with the

exception of Francine. 'Mr. Mirabel has made the best excuse he could think of for shortening his visit; and I don't wonder at it,' she said, looking significantly at Emily.

Emily was playing with one of the dogs; exercising him in the tricks which he had learnt. She balanced a morsel of sugar on his nose—and had no attention to spare for Francine.

Cecilia, as the mistress of the house, felt it her duty to interfere. 'That is a strange remark to make,' she answered. 'Do you mean to say that we have driven Mr. Mirabel away from us?'

'I accuse nobody,' Francine began with spiteful candour.

'Now she's going to accuse everybody!' Emily interposed, addressing herself facetiously to the dog.

'But when girls are bent on fascinating men, whether they like it or not,' Francine proceeded, 'men have only one alternative—they must keep out of the way.' She looked again at Emily, more pointedly than ever.

Even gentle Cecilia resented this. 'Whom do you refer to?' she said sharply.

'My dear!' Emily remonstrated, 'need you ask?' She glanced at Francine as she spoke, and then gave the dog his signal. He tossed up the sugar, and caught it in his mouth. His audience applauded him—and so for that time the skirmish ended.

Among the letters of the next morning's delivery, arrived Alban's reply. Emily's anticipations proved to be correct. The drawing-master's duties would not permit him to leave Netherwoods; and he, like Mirabel, sent his apologies. His short letter to Emily contained no further allusion to Miss Jethro; it began and ended on the first page.

Had he been disappointed by the tone of reserve in which Emily had written to him, under Mr. Wyvil's advice? Or (as Cecilia suggested) had his detention at the school so bitterly disappointed him that he was too disheartened to write at any length? Emily made no attempt to arrive at a conclusion, either one way or the other. She seemed to be in depressed spirits; and she spoke superstitiously, for the first time in Cecilia's experience of her.

'I don't like this reappearance of Miss Jethro,' she said. 'If the mystery about that woman is ever cleared up, it will bring trouble and sorrow to me—and I believe, in his own secret heart, Alban Morris thinks so too.'

'Write, and ask him,' Cecilia suggested.

'He is so kind and so unwilling to distress me,' Emily answered, 'that he wouldn't acknowledge it, even if I am right.'

In the middle of the week, the course of private life at Monks-moor suffered an interruption—due to the parliamentary position of the master of the house.

The insatiable appetite for making and hearing speeches, which represents one of the marked peculiarities of the English race (including their cousins in the United States), had seized on Mr. Wyvil's constituents. There was to be a political meeting at the market-hall, in the neighbouring town; and the member was expected to make an oration, passing in review contemporary events at home and abroad. 'Pray don't think of accompanying me,' the good man said to his guests. 'The hall is badly ventilated; and the speeches, including my own, will not be worth hearing.'

This humane warning was ungratefully disregarded. The gen-

tlemen were all interested in 'the objects of the meeting,' and the ladies were firm in the resolution not to be left at home by themselves. They dressed with a view to the large assembly of spectators before whom they were about to appear; and they out-talked the men on political subjects all the way to the town.

The most delightful of surprises was in store for them when they reached the market-hall. Among the crowd of ordinary gentlemen, waiting under the portico until the proceedings began, appeared one person of distinction, whose title was 'Reverend,' and whose name was Mirabel.

Francine was the first to discover him. She darted up the steps, and held out her hand.

'This is a pleasure!' she cried. 'Have you come here to see—' she was about to say *Me*, but, observing the strangers round her, altered the word to *Us*. 'Please give me your arm,' she whispered, before her young friends had arrived within hearing. 'I am so frightened in a crowd!'

She held fast by Mirabel, and kept a jealous watch on him. Was it only her fancy? or did she detect a new charm in his smile when he spoke to Emily?

Before it was possible to decide, the time for the meeting had arrived. Mr. Wyvil's friends were of course accommodated with seats on the platform. Francine, still insisting on her claim to Mirabel's arm, got a chair next to him. As she seated herself, she left him free for a moment. In that moment, the infatuated man took an empty chair on the other side of him, and placed it for Emily. He communicated to that hated rival the information which he ought to have reserved for Francine. 'The committee insist,' he said, 'on my proposing one of the Re-

solutions. I promise not to bore you; mine shall be the shortest speech delivered at the meeting.'

The proceedings began.

Among the earlier speakers not one was inspired by a feeling of mercy for the audience. The chairman revelled in words. The mover and seconder of the first Resolution (not having so much as the ghost of an idea to trouble either of them), poured out language in flowing and overflowing streams, like water from a perpetual spring. The heat exhaled by the crowded audience was already becoming insufferable. Cries of 'Sit down!' assailed the orator of the moment. The chairman was obliged to interfere. A man at the back of the hall roared out, 'Ventilation!' and broke a window with his stick. He was rewarded with three rounds of cheers; and was ironically invited to mount the platform and take the chair.

Under these embarrassing circumstances, Mirabel rose to speak.

He secured silence, at the outset, by a humorous allusion to the prolix speaker who had preceded him. 'Look at the clock, gentlemen,' he said; 'and limit my speech to an interval of ten minutes.' The applause which followed was heard, through the broken window, in the street. The boys among the mob outside intercepted the flow of air by climbing on each other's shoulders and looking in at the meeting through the gaps left by the shattered glass. Having proposed his Resolution with discreet brevity of speech, Mirabel courted popularity on the plan adopted by the late Lord Palmerston in the House of Commons—he told stories and made jokes, adapted to the intelligence of the dullest people who were listening to him. The charm of his voice and man-

ner completed his success. Punctually at the tenth minute, he sat down amid cries of 'Go on.' Francine was the first to take his hand, and to express admiration mutely by pressing it. He returned the pressure—but he looked at the wrong lady—the lady on the other side.

Although she made no complaint, he instantly saw that Emily was overcome by the heat. Her lips were white, and her eyes were closing. 'Let me take you out,' he said, 'or you will faint.'

Francine started to her feet to follow them. The lower order of the audience, eager for amusement, put their own humorous construction on the young lady's action. They roared with laughter. 'Let the parson and his sweetheart be,' they called out; 'two's company, Miss, and three isn't.' Mr. Wyvil interposed his authority, and rebuked them. A lady seated behind Francine interfered to good purpose by giving her a chair, which placed her out of sight of the audience. Order was restored, and the proceedings were resumed.

On the conclusion of the meeting, Mirabel and Emily were found waiting for their friends at the door. Mr. Wyvil innocently added fuel to the fire that was burning in Francine. He insisted that Mirabel should return to Monksmoor, and offered him a seat in the carriage at Emily's side.

Later in the evening, when they all met at dinner, there appeared a change in Miss de Sor which surprised everybody but Mirabel. She was gay and good-humoured, and especially amiable and attentive to Emily, who sat opposite to her at the table. 'What did you and Mr. Mirabel talk about while you were away from us?' she asked innocently. 'Politics'

Emily readily adopted Francine's friendly tone. 'Guess again!' she said gaily.

'I can only guess that you had the most delightful of companions,' Francine rejoined; 'and I wish I had been overcome by the heat too!'

Mirabel, attentively observing her, acknowledged the compliment by a bow, and left Emily to continue the conversation. In perfect good faith she owned to having led Mirabel to talk of himself. She had heard from Cecilia that his early life had been devoted to various occupations, and she was interested in knowing how circumstances had led him into devoting himself to the Church. Francine listened with the outward appearance of implicit belief, and with the inward conviction that Emily was deliberately deceiving her. When the little narrative was at an end, she was more agreeable than ever. She admired Emily's dress, and she rivalled Cecilia in enjoyment of the good things on the table; she entertained Mirabel with humorous anecdotes of the priests at San Domingo, and was so interested in the manufacture of violins, ancient and modern, that Mr. Wyvil promised to show her his famous collection of instruments, after dinner. Her overflowing amiability included even poor Miss Darnaway and the absent brothers and sisters. She heard, with flattering sympathy, how they had been ill and had got well again; what amusing tricks they played, what alarming accidents happened to them, and how remarkably clever they were, 'including, I do assure you, dear Miss de Sor, the baby only ten months old.' When the ladies rose to retire, Francine was, socially speaking, the heroine of the evening.

While the violins were in course of exhibition, Mirabel found an opportunity of speaking to Emily unobserved.

'Have you said or done anything to offend Miss de Sor?' he asked.

'Nothing whatever!' Emily declared, startled by the question. 'What makes you think I have offended her?'

'I have been trying to find a reason for the change in her,' Mirabel answered, 'especially the change towards yourself.'

'Well?'

'Well—she means mischief.'

'Mischief of what sort?'

'Of a sort which may expose her to discovery, unless she disarms suspicion at the outset. That is, as I believe, exactly what she has been doing this evening. I needn't warn you to be on your guard.'

All the next day Emily was on the watch for events, and nothing happened. Not the slightest appearance of jealousy betrayed itself in Francine. She made no attempt to attract to herself the attentions of Mirabel; and she showed no hostility to Emily, either by word, look, or manner.

The day after, an event occurred at Netherwoods. Alban Morris received an anonymous letter, addressed to him in these terms:

'A certain young lady, in whom you are supposed to be interested, is forgetting you in your absence. If you are not mean enough to allow yourself to be supplanted by another man, join the party at Monksmoor before it is too late.'

CHAPTER XLII.

COOKING.

THE day after the political meeting was a day of departures at the pleasant country house.

Miss Darnaway was recalled to the nursery at home. The old squire, who did justice to Mr. Wyvil's port wine, went away next, having guests to entertain at his own house. A far more serious loss followed. The three dancing men had engagements which drew them to new spheres of activity in other drawing-rooms. They said, with the same dreary grace of manner, 'Very sorry to go;' they drove to the railway, arrayed in the same perfect travelling suits of neutral tint; and they had but one difference of opinion among them—each firmly believed that he was smoking the best cigar to be got in London.

The morning after these departures would have been a dull morning indeed, but for the presence of Mirabel.

When breakfast was over, the invalid Miss Julia established herself on a sofa with a novel. Her father retired to the other end of the house, and profaned the art of music on music's most expressive instrument. Left with Emily, Cecilia, and Francine, Mirabel made one of his happy suggestions. 'We are thrown on our own resources, he said.' 'Let us distinguish ourselves by inventing some entirely new amusement for the day. You young ladies shall sit in council, and I will be secretary.' He turned to Cecilia. 'The meeting waits to hear the mistress of the house.'

Modest Cecilia appealed to her school-friends for help; addressing herself in the first instance, by the secretary's advice, to Francine, as the eldest. They all noticed another change in this

variable young person. She was silent and subdued; and she said wearily, 'I don't care what we do—shall we go out riding?'

The unanswerable objection to riding as a form of amusement, was that it had been more than once tried already. Something clever and surprising was anticipated from Emily when it came to her turn. She, too, disappointed expectation. 'Let us sit under the trees,' was all that she could suggest, 'and ask Mr. Mirabel to tell us a story.'

Mirabel laid down his pen, and took it on himself to reject this proposal. 'Remember,' he remonstrated, 'that I have an interest in the diversions of the day. You can't expect me to be amused by my own story. I appeal to Miss Wyvil to invent a pleasure, which will include the secretary.'

Cecilia blushed and looked uneasy. 'I think I have got an idea,' she announced, after some hesitation. 'May I propose that we all go to the keeper's lodge? There her courage failed her, and she hesitated again.'

Mirabel gravely registered the proposal, as far as it went. 'What are we to do when we get to the keeper's lodge?' he inquired.

'We are to ask the keeper's wife,' Cecilia proceeded, 'to lend us her kitchen.'

'To lend us her kitchen,' Mirabel repeated. 'And what are we to do in the kitchen?'

Cecilia looked down bashfully at her pretty hands crossed on her lap, and answered softly,

'Cook our own luncheon.'

Here was an entirely new amusement, in the most attractive sense of the words! Here was charming Cecilia's interest in the pleasures of the table so happily inspired, that the grateful meeting offered its tribute of applause—

even including Francine. The members of the council were young; their daring digestions contemplated without fear the prospect of eating their own amateur cookery. The one question that troubled them now was what they were to cook.

'I can make an omelette,' Cecilia ventured to say.

'If there is any cold chicken to be had,' Emily added, 'I undertake to follow the omelette with a mayonnaise.'

'There are clergymen in the Church of England who are even clever enough to fry potatoes,' Mirabel announced—'and I am one of them. What shall we have next? A pudding? Miss de Sor, can you make a pudding?'

Francine exhibited another new side to her character—a diffident and humble side. 'I am ashamed to say I don't know how to cook anything,' she confessed; 'you had better leave me out of it.'

But Cecilia was now in her element. Her plan of operations was wide enough even to include Francine. 'You shall wash the lettuce, my dear, and stone the olives for Emily's mayonnaise. Don't be discouraged! You shall have a companion; we will send to the rectory for Miss Plym—the very person to chop parsley and shalot for my omelette. O, Emily, what a morning we are going to have!' Her lovely blue eyes sparkled with joy; she gave Emily a kiss which Mirabel must have been more or less than man not to have coveted. 'I declare,' cried Cecilia, completely losing her head, 'I'm so excited, I don't know what to do with myself!'

Emily's intimate knowledge of her friend applied the right remedy. 'You don't know what to do with yourself!' she repeated. 'Have you no sense of duty! Give the cook your orders.'

Cecilia instantly recovered her presence of mind. She sat down at the writing-table, and made out a List of eatable productions in the animal and vegetable world, in which every other word was underlined two or three times over. Her serious face was a sight to see, when she rang for the cook, and the two held a privy council in a corner.

On the way to the keeper's lodge, the young mistress of the house headed a procession of servants carrying the raw materials. Francine followed, held in custody by Miss Plym—who took her responsibilities seriously, and clamoured for instruction in the art of chopping parsley. Mirabel and Emily were together, far behind; they were the only two members of the company whose minds were not occupied in one way or another by the kitchen.

'This child's play of ours doesn't seem to interest you,' Mirabel remarked.

'I am thinking,' Emily answered, 'of what you said to me about Francine.'

'I can say something more,' he rejoined. 'When I noticed the change in her at dinner, I told you she meant mischief. There is another change to-day, which suggests to my mind that the mischief is done.'

'And directed against me?' Emily asked.

Mirabel made no direct reply. It was impossible for *him* to remind her that she had, no matter how innocently, exposed herself to the jealous hatred of Francine. 'Time will tell us, what we don't know now,' he replied evasively.

'You seem to have faith in time, Mr. Mirabel.'

'The greatest faith. Time is the inveterate enemy of deceit. Sooner or later, every hidden thing is a thing doomed to discovery.'

'Without exception?'

'Yes,' he answered positively, 'without exception.'

At that moment Francine stopped, and looked back at them. Did she think that Emily and Mirabel had been talking together long enough? Miss Plym—with the parsley still on her mind—advanced to consult Emily's experience. The two walked on together, leaving Mirabel to overtake Francine. He saw, in her first look at him, the effort that it cost her to suppress those emotions which the pride of women is most deeply interested in concealing. Before a word had passed, he regretted that Emily had left them together.

'I wish I had your cheerful disposition,' she began, abruptly. 'I am out of spirits or out of temper—I don't know which; and I don't know why. Do you ever trouble yourself with thinking of the future?'

'As seldom as possible, Miss de Sor. In such a situation as mine, most people have prospects—I have none.'

He spoke gravely, conscious of not feeling at ease on his side. If he had been the most modest man that ever lived, he must have seen in Francine's face that she loved him.

When they had first been presented to each other, she was still under the influence of the meanest instincts in her scheming and selfish nature. She had thought to herself, 'With my money to help him, that man's celebrity would do the rest; the best society in England would be glad to receive Mirabel's wife.' As the days passed, strong feeling had taken the place of those contemptible aspirations: Mirabel had unconsciously inspired the one passion which was powerful enough to master Francine—

sensual passion. Wild hopes rioted in her. Measureless desires which she had never felt before, united themselves with capacities for wickedness, which had been the horrid growth of a few nights—capacities which suggested even viler attempts to rid herself of a supposed rivalry than slandering Emily by means of an anonymous letter. Without waiting for it to be offered, she took Mirabel's arm, and pressed it to her breast as they slowly walked on. The fear of discovery which had troubled her after she had sent her base letter to the post, vanished at that inspiring moment. She bent her head near enough to him when he spoke to feel his breath on her face.

'There is a strange similarity,' she said softly, 'between your position and mine. Is there anything cheering in *my* prospects? I am far away from home—my father and mother wouldn't care if they never saw me again. People talk about my money! What is the use of money to such a lonely wretch as I am? Suppose I write to London, and ask the lawyer if I may give it all away to some deserving person? Why not to you?'

'My dear Miss de Sor—!'

'Is there anything wrong, Mr. Mirabel, in wishing that I could make you a prosperous man?'

'You must not even talk of such a thing!'

'How proud you are!' she said submissively. 'O, I can't bear to think of you in that miserable village—a position so unworthy of your talents and your claims! And you tell me I must not talk about it. Would you have said that to Emily, if she was as anxious as I am to see you in your right place in the world?'

'I should have answered her, exactly as I have answered you.'

'She will never embarrass you,

Mr. Mirabel, by being as sincere as I am. Emily can keep her own secrets.'

'Is she to blame for doing that?'

'It depends on your feeling for her.'

'What feeling do you mean?'

'Suppose you heard she was engaged to be married?' Francine suggested.

Mirabel's manner—studiously cold and formal thus far—altered on a sudden. He looked with unconcealed anxiety at Francine. 'Do you say that seriously?' he asked.

'I said "suppose." I don't exactly know that she is engaged.'

'What *do* you know?'

'O, how interested you are in Emily! She is admired by some people. Are you one of them?'

Mirabel's experience of women warned him to try silence as a means of provoking her into speaking plainly. The experiment succeeded: Francine returned to the question that he had put to her, and abruptly answered it.

'You may believe me or not, as you like—I know of a man who is in love with her. He has had his opportunities; and he has made good use of them. Would you like to know who he is?'

'I should like to know anything which you may wish to tell me.' He did his best to make the reply in a tone of commonplace politeness—and he might have succeeded in deceiving a man. The woman's quicker ear told her that he was angry. Francine took the full advantage of that change in her favour.

'I am afraid your good opinion of Emily will be shaken,' she quietly resumed, 'when I tell you that she has encouraged a man who is only drawing-master at a school. At the same time, a person in her circumstances—I mean she has no money—ought not to

be very hard to please. Of course she has never spoken to you of Mr. Alban Morris?'

'Not that I remember.'

Only four words—but they satisfied Francine.

The one thing wanting to complete the obstacle which she had now placed in Emily's way, was that Alban Morris should enter on the scene. He might hesitate; but, if he was really fond of Emily, the anonymous letter would sooner or later bring him to Monksmoor. In the meantime, her object was gained. She dropped Mirabel's arm.

'Here is the lodge,' she said gaily—'I declare Cecilia has got an apron on already! Come, and cook.'

CHAPTER XLIII.

SOUNDING.

MIRABEL left Francine to enter the lodge by herself. His mind was disturbed: he felt the importance of gaining time for reflection before he and Emily met again.

The keeper's garden was at the back of the lodge. Passing through the wicket-gate, he found a little summer-house at a turn in the path. Nobody was there: he went in and sat down.

At intervals, he had even yet encouraged himself to underrate the true importance of the feeling which Emily had awakened in him. There was an end to all self-deception now. After what Francine had said to him, this shallow and frivolous man no longer resisted the all-absorbing influence of love. He shrank under the one terrible question that forced itself on his mind:—Had that jealous girl spoken the truth?

In what process of investiga-

tion could he trust, to set this anxiety at rest? To apply openly to Emily would be to take a liberty, which Emily was the last person in the world to permit. In his recent intercourse with her he had felt more strongly than ever the importance of speaking with reserve. He had been scrupulously careful to take no unfair advantage of his opportunity, when he had removed her from the meeting, and when they had walked together, with hardly a creature to observe them, in the lonely outskirts of the town. Emily's gaiety and good humour had not led him astray: he knew that these were bad signs, viewed in the interests of love. His one hope of touching her deeper sympathies was to wait for the help that might yet come from time and chance. With a bitter sigh, he resigned himself to the necessity of being as agreeable and amusing as ever: it was just possible that he might lure her into alluding to Alban Morris, if he began innocently by making her laugh.

As he rose to return to the lodge, the keeper's little terrier, prowling about the garden, looked into the summer-house. Seeing a stranger, the dog showed his teeth and growled.

Mirabel shrank back against the wall behind him, trembling in every limb. His eyes stared in terror as the dog came nearer; barking in high triumph over the discovery of a frightened man whom he could bully. Mirabel called out for help. A labourer at work in the garden ran to the place—and stopped with a broad grin of amusement at seeing a grown man terrified by a barking dog. 'Well,' he said to himself, after Mirabel had passed out under protection, 'there goes a coward if ever there was one yet!'

Mirabel waited a minute behind the lodge to recover himself. He had been so completely unnerved that his hair was wet with perspiration. While he used his handkerchief, he shuddered at other recollections than the recollection of the dog. 'After that night at the inn,' he thought, 'the least thing frightens me!'

He was received by the young ladies with cries of derisive welcome. 'O, for shame! for shame! here are the potatoes already cut, and nobody to fry them!'

Mirabel assumed the mask of cheerfulness—with the desperate resolution of an actor, amusing his audience at a time of domestic distress. He astonished the keeper's wife by showing that he really knew how to use her frying-pan. Cecilia's omelette was tough—but the young ladies eat it. Emily's mayonnaise sauce was almost as liquid as water—they swallowed it nevertheless by the help of spoons. The potatoes followed, crisp and dry and delicious—and Mirabel became more popular than ever. 'He is the only one of us,' Cecilia sadly acknowledged, 'who knows how to cook.'

When they all left the lodge for a stroll in the park, Francine attached herself to Cecilia and Miss Plym. She resigned Mirabel to Emily—in the happy belief that she had paved the way for a misunderstanding between them.

The merriment at the luncheon-table had revived Emily's good spirits. She had a light-hearted remembrance of the failure of her sauce. Mirabel saw her smiling to herself. 'May I ask what amuses you?' he said.

'I was thinking of the debt of gratitude that we owe to Mr. Wyvil,' she replied. 'If he had not persuaded you to return to Monksmoor, we should never

have seen the famous Mr. Mirabel with a frying-pan in his hand, and never have tasted the only good dish at our luncheon.'

Mirabel tried vainly to adopt his companion's easy tone. Now that he was alone with her, the doubts that Francine had aroused shook the prudent resolution at which he had arrived in the garden. He ran the risk, and told Emily plainly why he had returned to Mr. Wyvil's house.

'Although I am sensible of our host's kindness,' he answered, 'I should have gone back to my parsonage—but for You.'

She declined to understand him seriously. 'Then the affairs of your parish are neglected—and I am to blame?' she said.

'Am I the first man who has neglected his duties for your sake?' he asked. 'I wonder whether the masters, at school, had the heart to report you when you neglected your lessons?'

She thought of Alban—and betrayed herself by a heightened colour. The moment after, she changed the subject. Mirabel could no longer resist the conclusion that Francine had told him the truth.

'When do you leave us?' she inquired.

'To-morrow is Saturday—I must go back as usual.'

'And how will your deserted parish receive you?'

He made a desperate effort to be as amusing as usual.

'I am sure of preserving my popularity,' he said, 'while I have a cask in the cellar, and a few spare sixpences in my pocket. The public spirit of my parishioners asks for nothing but money and beer. Before I went to that wearisome meeting, I told my housekeeper that I was going to make a speech about reform. She didn't know what I meant.

I explained that reform might increase the number of British citizens who had the right of voting at elections for Parliament. She brightened up directly. "Ah," she said, "I've heard my husband talk about elections. The more there are of them (*he says*) the more money he'll get for his vote. I'm all for reform." On my way out of the house, I tried the man who works in my garden on the same subject. He didn't look at the matter from the housekeeper's sanguine point of view. "I don't deny that Parliament once gave me a good dinner for nothing at the public-house," he admitted. "But that was years ago—and (you'll excuse me, sir) I hear nothing of another dinner to come. It's a matter of opinion, of course. I don't myself believe in reform." There are specimens of the state of public spirit in our village!' He paused. Emily was listening—but he had not succeeded in choosing a subject that amused her. He tried a topic more nearly connected with his own interests; the topic of the future. 'Our good friend has asked me to prolong my visit, after Sunday's duties are over,' he said. 'I hope I shall find you here, next week!'

'Will the affairs of your parish allow you to come back?' Emily asked mischievously.

'The affairs of my parish—if you force me to confess it—were only an excuse.'

'An excuse for what?'

'An excuse for keeping away from Monksmoor—in the interests of my own tranquillity. The experiment has failed. While you are here, I can't keep away.'

She still declined to understand him seriously. 'Must I tell you in plain words that flattery is thrown away on me?' she said.

'Flattery is not offered to you,' he answered gravely. 'I beg

your pardon for having led to the mistake by talking of myself.' Having appealed to her indulgence by that act of submission, he ventured on another distant allusion to the man whom he hated and feared. 'Shall I meet any friends of yours,' he resumed, 'when I return on Monday?'

'What do you mean?'

'I only meant to ask if Mr. Wyvil expects any new guests?'

As he put the question, Cecilia's voice was heard behind them, calling to Emily. They both turned round. Mr. Wyvil had joined his daughter and her two friends. He advanced to meet Emily.

'I have some news for you that you little expect,' he said. 'A telegram has just arrived from Netherwoods. Mr. Alban Morris has got leave of absence, and is coming here to-morrow.'

CHAPTER XLIV.

COMPETING.

TIME at Monksmoor had advanced to the half-hour before dinner, on Saturday evening.

Cecilia and Francine, Mr. Wyvil and Mirabel, were loitering in the conservatory. In the drawing-room, Emily had been considerably left alone with Alban. He had missed the early train from Netherwoods; but he had arrived in time to dress for dinner, and to offer the necessary explanations.

If it had been possible for Alban to allude to the anonymous letter, he might have owned that his first impulse had led him to destroy it, and to assert his confidence in Emily by refusing Mr. Wyvil's invitation. But try as he might to forget them, the base words that he had read re-

mained in his memory. Irritating him at the outset, they had ended in rousing his jealousy. Under that delusive influence, he persuaded himself that he had acted, in the first instance, without due consideration. It was surely his interest—it might even be his duty—to go to Mr. Wyvil's house, and judge for himself. After some last wretched moments of hesitation, he had decided on effecting a compromise with his own better sense, by consulting Miss Ladd. That excellent lady did exactly what he had expected her to do. She made arrangements which granted him leave of absence, from the Saturday to the Tuesday following. The excuse which had served him, in telegraphing to Mr. Wyvil, must now be repeated, in accounting for his unexpected appearance to Emily. 'I found a person to take charge of my class,' he said; 'and I gladly availed myself of the opportunity of seeing you again.'

After observing him attentively, while he was speaking to her, Emily owned, with her customary frankness, that she had noticed something in his manner which left her not quite at her ease.

'I wonder,' she said, 'if there is any foundation for a doubt that has troubled me? To his unutterable relief, she at once explained what the doubt was. 'I am afraid I offended you, in replying to your letter about Miss Jethro.'

In this case, Alban could enjoy the luxury of speaking unreservedly. He confessed that Emily's letter had disappointed him.

'I expected you to answer me with less reserve,' he replied; 'and I began to think I had acted rashly in writing to you at all. When there is a better opportunity, I may have a word to say—' He was apparently interrupted by something that he saw

in the conservatory. Looking that way, Emily perceived that Mirabel was the object which had attracted Alban's attention. The vile anonymous letter was in his mind again. Without a preliminary word to prepare Emily, he suddenly changed the subject. 'How do you like the clergyman?' he asked.

'Very much indeed,' she replied without the slightest embarrassment. 'Mr. Mirabel is clever and agreeable—and not at all spoilt by his success. I am sure,' she said innocently, 'you will like him too.'

Alban's face answered her unmistakably in the negative sense—but Emily's attention was drawn the other way by Francine. She joined them at the moment, on the look-out for any signs of an encouraging result which her treachery might already have produced. Alban had been inclined to suspect her, when he had received the letter. He rose and bowed as she approached. Something—he was unable to realise what it was—told him, in the moment when they looked at each other, that his suspicion had hit the mark.

In the conservatory the ever-amiable Mirabel had left his friends for awhile in search of flowers for Cecilia. She turned to her father when they were alone, and asked him which of the gentlemen was to take her in to dinner—Mr. Mirabel or Mr. Morris?

'Mr. Morris, of course,' he answered. 'He is the new guest—and he turns out to be more than the equal, socially speaking, of our other friend. When I showed him his room, I asked if he was related to a man who bore the same name—a fellow student of mine, years and years ago, at college. He is my friend's younger son; one of a ruined family—but

persons of high distinction in their day.'

Mirabel returned with the flowers, just as dinner was announced.

'You are to take Emily to-day,' Cecilia said to him, leading the way out of the conservatory. As they entered the drawing-room, Alban was just offering his arm to Emily. 'Papa gives you to me, Mr. Morris,' Cecilia explained pleasantly. Alban hesitated, apparently not understanding the allusion. Mirabel interfered with his best grace: 'Mr. Wyvil offers you the honour of taking his daughter to the dining-room.' Alban's face darkened ominously, as the elegant little clergyman gave his arm to Emily, and followed Mr. Wyvil and Francine out of the room. Cecilia looked at her silent and surly companion, and almost envied her lazy sister, dining—under cover of a convenient headache—in her own room.

Having already made up his mind that Alban Morris required careful handling, Mirabel waited a little before he led the conversation as usual. Between the soup and the fish, he made an interesting confession, addressed to Emily in the strictest confidence.

'I have taken a fancy to your friend Mr. Morris,' he said. 'First impressions, in my case, decide everything; I like people or dislike them on impulse. That man appeals to my sympathies. Is he a good talker?'

'I should say Yes,' Emily answered prettily, 'if you were not present.'

Mirabel was not to be beaten, even by a woman, in the art of paying compliments. He looked admiringly at Alban (sitting opposite to him), and said: 'Let us listen.'

This flattering suggestion not only pleased Emily—it artfully

served Mirabel's purpose. That is to say, it secured him an opportunity for observation of what was going on, at the other side of the table.

Alban's instincts as a gentleman had led him to control his irritation, and to regret that he had suffered it to appear. Anxious to please, he presented himself at his best. Gentle Cecilia forgave and forgot the angry look which had startled her. Mr. Wyvil was delighted with the son of his old friend. Emily felt secretly proud of the good opinions which her admirer was gathering; and Francine saw with pleasure that he was asserting his claim to Emily's preference, in the way of all others which would be most likely to discourage his rival. These various impressions—produced while Alban's enemy was ominously silent—began to suffer an imperceptible change, from the moment when Mirabel decided that his time had come to take the lead. A remark made by Alban offered him the chance for which he had been on the watch. He agreed with the remark; he enlarged on the remark; he was brilliant and familiar, and instructive and amusing—and still it was all due to the remark. Alban's temper was once more severely tried. Mirabel's mischievous object had not escaped his penetration. He did his best to put obstacles in the adversary's way—and was baffled, time after time, with the readiest ingenuity. If he interrupted—the sweet-tempered clergyman submitted and went on. If he differed—modest Mr. Mirabel said in the most amiable manner, 'I daresay I am wrong,' and handled the topic from his opponent's point of view. Never had such a perfect Christian sat before at Mr. Wyvil's table: not a hard word, not an impatient look, es-

caped him. The longer Alban resisted, the more surely he lost ground in the general estimation. Cecilia was disappointed; Emily was grieved; Mr. Wyvil's favourable opinion began to waver; Francine was disgusted. When dinner was over, and the carriage was waiting to take the shepherd back to his flock by moonlight, Mirabel's triumph was complete. He had made Alban the innocent means of publicly exhibiting his perfect temper and perfect politeness, under their best and brightest aspect.

So that day ended. Sunday promised to pass quietly, in the absence of Mirabel. The morning came—and it seemed doubtful whether the promise would be fulfilled.

Francine had passed an uneasy night. No such encouraging result as she had anticipated had hitherto followed the appearance of Alban Morris at Monksmoor. He had clumsily allowed Mirabel to improve his position—while he had, himself, lost ground—in Emily's estimation. If this first disastrous consequence of the meeting between the two men was permitted to repeat itself on future occasions, Emily and Mirabel would be brought more closely together, and Alban himself would be the unhappy cause of it. Francine rose, on the Sunday morning, before the table was laid for breakfast—resolved to try the effect of a timely word of advice.

Her bedroom was situated in the front of the house. The man she was looking for presently passed within her range of view from the window, on his way to take a morning walk in the park. She followed him immediately.

'Good-morning, Mr. Morris.'

He raised his hat and bowed—without speaking, and without looking at her.

'We resemble each other in one particular,' she proceeded, graciously; 'we both like to breathe the fresh air before breakfast.'

He said exactly what common politeness obliged him to say, and no more—he said,

'Yes.'

Some girls might have been discouraged. Francine went on.

'It is no fault of mine, Mr. Morris, that we have not been better friends. For some reason, into which I don't presume to inquire, you seem to distrust me. I really don't know what I have done to deserve it.'

'Are you sure of that?' he asked—eyeing her suddenly and searchingly as he spoke.

Her hard face settled into a rigid look; her eyes met his eyes with a stony defiant stare. Now, for the first time, she knew that he suspected her of having written the anonymous letter. Every evil quality in her nature stood on the defence. A hardened old woman could not have sustained the shock of discovery with a more devilish composure than this girl displayed. 'Perhaps, you will explain yourself,' she said.

'I have explained myself,' he answered.

'Then I must be content,' she rejoined, 'to remain in the dark. I had intended, out of my regard for Emily, to suggest that you might—with advantage to yourself, and to interests that are very dear to you—be more careful in your behaviour to Mr. Mirabel. Are you disposed to listen to me?'

'Do you wish me to answer that question plainly, Miss de Sor?'

'I insist on your answering it plainly.'

'Then I am not disposed to listen to you.'

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'May I know why? or am I to be left in the dark again?'

'You are to be left, if you please, to your own ingenuity.'

Francine looked at him, with a malignant smile. 'One of these days, Mr. Morris—I will deserve your confidence in my ingenuity.' She said it, and went back to the house.

This was the only element of disturbance that troubled the perfect tranquillity of the day. What Francine had proposed to do, with the one idea of making Alban serve her purpose, was accomplished a few hours later by Emily's influence for good over the man who loved her.

They passed the afternoon together uninterruptedly in the distant solitudes of the park. In the course of conversation, Emily found an opportunity of discreetly alluding to Mirabel. 'You mustn't be jealous of our clever little friend,' she said; 'I like him, and admire him; but—'

'But you don't love him?'

She smiled at the eager way in which Alban put the question. 'There is no fear of that,' she answered brightly.

'Not even if you discovered that he loves you?'

'Not even then. Are you content at last? Promise me not to be rude to Mr. Mirabel again.'

'For his sake?'

'No—for my sake. I don't like to see you place yourself at a disadvantage towards another man; I don't like you to disappoint me.'

The happiness of hearing her say those words transfigured him—the manly beauty of his earlier and happier years seemed to have returned to Alban. He took her hand—he was too agitated to speak.

'You are forgetting Mr. Mirabel,' she reminded him gently.

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'I will be all that is civil and kind to Mr. Mirabel; I will like him and admire him as you do. O Emily, are you a little, only a very little, fond of me?'

'I don't quite know.'

'May I try to find out?'

'How?' she asked.

Her fair cheek was very near to him. The softly-rising colour on it said, Answer me here—and he answered.

CHAPTER XLV.

MISCHIEF-MAKING.

ON Monday, Mirabel made his appearance—and the demon of discord returned with him.

Alban had employed the earlier part of the day in making a sketch in the park—intended as a little present for Emily. Presenting himself in the drawing-room, when his work was completed, he found Cecilia and Francine alone. He asked where Emily was.

The question had been addressed to Cecilia. Francine answered it.

'Emily mustn't be disturbed,' she said.

'Why not?'

'She is with Mr. Mirabel in the rose-garden. I saw them talking together—evidently feeling the deepest interest in what they were saying to each other. Don't interrupt them—you will only be in the way.'

Cecilia at once protested against this last assertion. 'She is trying to make mischief, Mr. Morris—don't believe her. I am sure they will be glad to see you, if you join them in the garden.'

Francine rose, and left the room. She turned, and looked at Alban as she opened the door. 'Try it,' she said—'and you will find I am right.'

'Francine sometimes talks in a

very ill-natured way,' Cecilia gently remarked. 'Do you think she means it, Mr. Morris?'

'I had better not offer an opinion,' Alban replied.

'Why?'

'I can't speak impartially; I dislike Miss de Sor.'

There was a pause. Alban's sense of self-respect forbade him to try the experiment which Francine had maliciously suggested. His thoughts—less easy to restrain—wandered in the direction of the garden. The attempt to make him jealous had failed; but he was conscious, at the same time, that Emily had disappointed him. After what they had said to each other in the park, she ought to have remembered that women are at the mercy of appearances. If Mirabel had something of importance to say to her, she might have avoided exposing herself to Francine's spiteful misconstruction: it would have been easy to arrange with Cecilia that a third person should be present at the interview.

While he was absorbed in these reflections, Cecilia—embarrassed by the silence—was trying to find a topic of conversation. Alban roughly pushed his sketch-book away from him, on the table. Was he displeased with Emily? The same question had occurred to Cecilia at the time of the correspondence, on the subject of Miss Jethro. To recall those letters led her, by natural sequence, to another effort of memory. She was reminded of the person who had been the cause of the correspondence: her interest was revived in the mystery of Miss Jethro.

'Has Emily told you that I have seen your letters?' she asked.

He roused himself with a start. 'I beg your pardon. What letters are you thinking of?'

'I was thinking particularly of the letter which mentioned Miss Jethro's visit. Emily was so puzzled and so surprised that she showed it to me—and we both consulted my father. Have you spoken to Emily about Miss Jethro?

'I have tried—but when I mentioned Miss Jethro's name, Emily seemed to be unwilling to pursue the subject.'

'Have you made any discoveries since you wrote to Emily?'

'No. The mystery is as impenetrable as ever.'

As he replied in those terms, he saw Mirabel enter the conservatory from the garden, on his way to the drawing-room.

Happy in the conviction that Emily loved him, there was now no feeling of jealousy mingled with the dislike and distrust of the popular preacher, which Alban found it impossible to overcome. But to see the man, whose introduction to Emily it had been Miss Jethro's mysterious object to prevent, at the very moment when he had been speaking of Miss Jethro herself—was, not only a temptation to curiosity, but a direct incentive (in Emily's own interests) to make an effort at discovery. Alban pursued the conversation with Cecilia, in a tone which was loud enough to be heard in the conservatory.

'The one chance of getting any information that I can see,' he proceeded, 'is to speak to Mr. Mirabel.'

'I shall be only too glad, if I can be of any service to Miss Wyvil and Mr. Morris.'

With those obliging words, Mirabel made a dramatic entry, and looked at Cecilia with his irresistible smile. Startled by his sudden appearance, she unconsciously assisted Alban's design. Her silence gave him the

opportunity of speaking in her place.

'We were talking,' he said quietly to Mirabel, 'of a lady with whom you are acquainted.'

'Indeed! May I ask the lady's name?'

'Miss Jethro.'

Mirabel sustained the shock with extraordinary self-possession—so far as any betrayal by sudden movement was concerned. But his colour told the truth: it faded to ghastly paleness—it revealed, even to Cecilia's eyes, a man struck dumb by fright.

Alban offered him a chair. He refused to take it by a gesture. Alban tried an apology next. 'I am afraid I have ignorantly revived some painful associations. Pray excuse me.'

The apology roused Mirabel: he felt the necessity of offering some explanation. In timid animals, the one defensive capacity which is always ready for action is cunning. Mirabel was too wily to dispute the inference—the inevitable inference—which any one must have drawn, after seeing the effect on him that the name of Miss Jethro had produced. He admitted that 'painful associations' had been revived, and deplored the 'nervous sensibility' which had permitted it to be seen.

'No blame can possibly attach to *you*, my dear sir,' he proceeded, in his most amiable manner. 'Will it be indiscreet, on my part, if I ask how you first became acquainted with Miss Jethro?'

'I first became acquainted with her, at Miss Ladd's school,' Alban answered. 'She was, for a short time only, one of the teachers; and she left her situation rather suddenly.' He paused—but Mirabel made no remark. 'After an interval of a few months,' he resumed, 'I saw Miss Jethro again.'

She called on me at my lodgings, near Netherwoods.'

'Merely to renew your former acquaintance?'

Mirabel made that inquiry with an eager anxiety for the reply which he was quite unable to conceal. It was plain that Miss Jethro had left him in ignorance of her memorable visit, and of the purpose that had led to it. Alban was under no engagement to keep the secret; and he was determined to leave no means untried of throwing light on Miss Jethro's mysterious warning. He repeated the plain narrative of the interview, which he had communicated by letter to Emily. Mirabel's manner, while he listened, showed that Alban's answer had taken him agreeably by surprise. He had evidently serious reasons to dread what Miss Jethro might have it in her power to say of him. His face brightened the moment he knew that she had not said it.

'After what I have told you, can you give me no explanation?' Alban asked.

'I am quite unable, Mr. Morris, to help you.'

Was he lying? or speaking the truth? The impression produced on Alban was that he had spoken the truth.

Women are never so ready as men to resign themselves to the disappointment of their hopes. Cecilia, silently listening up to this time, now ventured to speak—animated by her sisterly interest in Emily.

'Have you no idea, Mr. Mirabel, of Miss Jethro's motive?' she asked.

'What motive do you mean, Miss Wyvil?'

'I mean her motive for trying to prevent Emily Brown from meeting you, in my father's house.'

'I know no more of her motive than you do,' Mirabel replied.

Alban interposed. 'Miss Jethro left me,' he said, 'with the intention—quite openly expressed—of trying to prevent you from accepting your invitation to Monksmoor. Did she make the attempt?'

Mirabel admitted that she had made the attempt. 'But,' he added, 'without mentioning Miss Emily's name, and without even hinting that it was her wish to prevent me from meeting any person at Mr. Wyvil's house. I was asked to postpone my visit, as a favour to herself, because she had her own reasons for wishing it. I had *my* reasons' (he bowed with gallantry to Cecilia) 'for being eager to have the honour of knowing Mr. Wyvil and his daughter; and I refused.'

Once more, the doubt arose: was he lying? or speaking the truth? And, once more, Alban could not resist the conclusion that he was speaking the truth.

'There is one thing I should like to know,' Mirabel continued, after some hesitation. 'Has Miss Emily been informed of this strange affair?'

'Certainly!'

Mirabel seemed to be disposed to continue his inquiries—and suddenly changed his mind.

'Is there anything more to be said?' he asked.

'Nothing that *I* know of,' Alban answered.

'And nothing that *I* know of,' Mirabel repeated with the same emphasis. He bowed, and went out as he had come in—by way of the conservatory.

'Is he going back to Emily?' Cecilia exclaimed.

Alban rose to follow him—and checked himself.

'No,' he thought, 'I trust Emily!' He sat down again by Cecilia's side.

Mirabel had indeed returned to the rose-garden. He found Emily employed as he had left her, in making a crown of roses, to be worn by Cecilia in the evening. But, in one other respect, there was a change. Francine was present.

'Excuse me for sending you on a needless errand,' Emily said to Mirabel; 'Miss de Sor tells me Mr. Morris has finished his sketch. She left him in the drawing-room—why didn't you bring him here?'

'He was talking with Miss Wyvil.'

Mirabel answered absently—with his eyes on Francine. He gave her one of those significant looks, which says to a third person, 'Why are you here?' Francine's jealousy declined to understand him. She had gone into the rose-garden for the express purpose of intruding on Emily and Mirabel—and she stood her ground. He tried a broader hint, in words.

'Are you going to walk in the garden?' he said.

Francine was impenetrable. 'No,' she answered, 'I am going to stay here with Emily.'

Mirabel had no choice but to yield. Imperative anxieties forced him to say, in Francine's presence, what he had hoped to say to Emily privately.

'When you asked me to go to the house, and see if Mr. Morris

had returned,' he began, 'you little thought what a surprise was in store for me, when I entered the drawing-room. They were talking of—Miss Jethro.'

Emily dropped the rose-crown in her lap. Astonishment held her speechless.

'Mr. Morris has told me the strange story of Miss Jethro's visit,' Mirabel continued; 'but I am in some doubt whether he has spoken to me without reserve. Don't suppose I blame him. I am in a state of anxiety that trusts to you for relief. Tell me, I beg and pray, exactly what you know! In speaking to Mr. Morris, did Miss Jethro say anything which tended to lower me in your estimation?'

'Certainly not, Mr. Mirabel—so far as I know. If I had heard anything of the kind, I should have thought it my duty to tell you. Will it relieve your anxiety, if I go at once to Mr. Morris, and ask him plainly whether he has concealed anything from you or from me?'

Mirabel gratefully kissed her hand. 'Your kindness overpowers me,' he said—speaking, for once, with true emotion.

Emily immediately returned to the house. As soon as she was out of sight, Francine approached Mirabel, trembling with suppressed rage.

(To be continued.)

THE MEISSONIER EXHIBITION IN PARIS.

It is but a few short months ago that the whole art world was convulsed with horror at hearing of the vandalism perpetrated by the wife of an American millionaire, who, having commissioned the great French painter, M. Meissonier, to limn her portrait, committed it to the flames when finished, because she held that due justice had not been done to her features. To burn a picture of Meissonier's, pictures which amateurs cover not only with gold, but bank-notes, and all for the satisfaction of one woman's idle vanity! There was no end to the cackle in society, to the comments in society papers. If the lady committed the deed with the view to make herself notorious, she certainly succeeded. Is it to her we owe the deeply interesting exhibition that M. Georges Petit, that enterprising art-dealer, has just opened in his elegant galleries in the Rue de Sèze, and which are the talk and sensation of contemporary Paris! We half suspect it, and if so, can say with Ferdinand in *The Tempest*, 'most poor matters point to rich ends.' It is always both interesting and instructive to see the complete works of an artist collected together. Only thus can we duly gauge his strength and his weakness, only thus comprehend his idiosyncrasies, his characteristic features. It is a dangerous ordeal, from which many a great reputation has not come out unscathed; but it is one that may justly and properly be made, and which alone can help the critic to establish an artist's proper status in the world of art. Meis-

sonier has well stood the test. He has come out of the ordeal with, if possible, a greater reputation than before, as a conscientious, thorough, painstaking artist, a draughtsman of unfailing spirit and accuracy. He is not one of those painters whose work goes to our heart. It satisfies rather our head, our reason, and this, no doubt, because the head and reason have been the motors that have set this work in action. Meissonier is no idealist. He paints no poems with brush or palette. He has nothing in common with the romantic movement that convulsed French literature and art in the days of his youth, to which we owe the novels and poems of a George Sand, an Alfred de Musset, the paintings of a Delacroix and Ary Scheffer. He belongs essentially to what has been called *l'école de bon sens*. He is for France that which Adolf Menzel is for Germany, an artist who paints with truth, scientific and historical accuracy, the events of a bygone century with which he is in mental sympathy. After studying the works of both, it is easy to believe the truth of an anecdote told of the two. It seems they admire each other greatly, but neither can speak the tongue of the other. Menzel, that arch-Prussian, who rarely leaves the shelter of his native needle-guns and spiked helmets, was induced to visit the Paris Exhibition of 1867. Of course he sought out Meissonier, and the two spent long days together seeing pictures, but their only means of communion was



MEISSONIER.

See the Sketch.

occasionally shaking hands with each other by way of substitution for speech. Like Menzel, Meissonier is a character. He is not as churlish as his German brother in art, but he is equally reticent and retiring, and up to this day even his most intimate friends are unacquainted with his life's history. We are promised memoirs from his own hand: he has long been busy writing them, and until these appear all that is known of him is more or less imperfect. Even the date of his birth is wrapt in mystery. It is given respectively as 1811, 1813, and 1815. On the whole, however, the first seems the most probably exact. We do know where he was born, so that, as in the case of Homer, seven cities need not dispute the glory of producing him. Lyons, that manufacturing city in the south of France, is his native place. Of his parents nothing is known, but from indirect evidence it is assumed that his infancy was one of sordid poverty, his boyhood one of spiritual and material want. By some means unknown he contrived to come to Paris in his nineteenth year, and here, of course, a hard struggle ensued. 'L'art vit de misère, il meurt de richesse,' says Alexandre Dumas. Well if it be true, but if a true saying it is indeed a hard one. The details of Meissonier's struggle are not known, but it is related that in those dark days he used to work at the production of pictures, painted for export, at five francs the square mètre. His work at last attracted the notice of Léon Cogniet, the Nestor of French art. He opened his studio to the lad, and gave him encouragement and aid. It was, perhaps, thanks to him, that a leading publishing house gave him a commission to illustrate some important works. It proved

Meissonier's first step upon the ladder of success. Where and how he received his artistic training is to this day a mystery. Apparently he came to Paris with all his master qualities fully developed, and from the first he seems to have found the groove in which he has remained without swerving. This is noteworthy, since most intellectual workers commence with timidly feeling their way in various directions. *Ab initio* we see the master's exquisite finish and minute detail, his refined and chastened sense of comedy, his tendency to regard rather the merely dramatic and effective side of a subject than its human aspect; for Meissonier in his work shows none of the enthusiasm for humanity of which his life is not devoid. Thus he has never rallied from the patriotic sorrows caused him by the Franco-Prussian War. Thus, again, the entire proceeds of the eminently successful exhibition of his works now being held will go to the funds of that charitable institution known as *L'Hospitalité de Nuit*. Among the works illustrated by Meissonier's pencil was *Paul et Virginie* and *La Chaumière Indienne*, the former containing no less than forty-three of his woodcuts, besides head and tail pieces, initial letters, and emblematic designs; the latter no less than eighty-six, in which all that is quaint and humorous in St. Pierre's work is wonderfully emphasised.

It was in 1834 that Meissonier's first exhibited oil painting was seen at the Salon. It was painted on canvas, contrary to his later custom to paint on panel, and was bought by a Parisian fine arts society for the beggarly sum of 100 francs. It has since been bought by Sir Richard Wallace at a figure unknown. It

is called 'The Visitors,' and is an entirely representative specimen of the large number of small pictures dealing with Flemish or eighteenth-century interiors that were to follow it, and which have led Meissonier to be compared not improperly to Terburg, Teniers the younger, and Metz, only with this difference, that they painted, and hence reflected, the age in which they lived, while Meissonier paints it only by intuitive sympathy. With this difference, too, that Meissonier, as a Frenchman, has more native grace and elegance than is owned of these Dutchmen. It represents two Flemish burghers visiting their burgomaster. All three are seated and chatting amiably. Near to them is a table, covered with a green cloth, on which are seen an earthenware jug and three glasses. Very admirable is the management of the light, in the Rembrandt-like way in which it is made to play round the heads and white ruffs of the figures. As the present exhibition is happily arranged in chronological order, our Parisian cousins herein setting us a laudable example of what was so unhappily omitted in the Tadmira, Reynolds, Watts, and other of our artist exhibitions, this picture is the first to greet our eyes. The date of the canvas gives the present exhibition quite a peculiar significance, for it reveals to us that it is neither more nor less than the celebration of the artist's golden wedding with the art to which he has been so true, so faithful, so devoted. From this date follow a number of those characteristic tiny panels consisting of dainty, pretty, vigorous, or gently humorous themes associated with the artist's name. Meissonier loves to repeat favourite subjects—his adversaries point to this as marking a want of imagi-

nation on his part—and the number of Readers, Smokers, Drinkers, Artists in their Studios, Chess-players, Polichinelles, Hal-lebardiers, Bravi, &c., has yet to be told. The interest he manages to extract from such trivial themes is certainly remarkable, but, on the other hand, one cannot but regret that he should have expended so much time and labour upon such unimportant, commonplace, and unsuggestive subjects. Still, we must not haggle with the good things given unto us by the gods.

'La Barricade,' exhibited in 1850, is the first more important work we come across as we traverse M. Petit's rooms. When first seen, it was named 'Souvenir of the Civil War,' and was the representation of a scene really witnessed by Meissonier in the days of June 1848. It shows a deserted and sombre street strewn with corpses. The barricade has been broken. No living person or thing is in sight. The horror of this drama is rendered with terrible fidelity. What it lacks is that it does not also evoke the fellow-sensation of pity which, according to the Aristotelean doctrine, is needed to be linked to horror in order to make tragedy complete. Meissonier, as we have said before, never speaks to our hearts. Of a replica of this subject, however, an anecdote is told that does credit to his heart, and is illustrative of his own great generosity. The picture was standing in Meissonier's studio one evening when Eugène Delacroix dined with him. 'C'est superbe!' cried Delacroix, surveying the picture. 'Vous trouvez?' said Meissonier. 'Eh bien, si cela vous plaît, prenez-le.' And Delacroix carried home the precious picture, which, at his death, fetched no less than 6000 francs. The same year saw

the exhibition of 'The Painter showing his Sketches,' a thoroughly Meissonier interior of a studio, in which reigns that species of elegant disorder which charms and seduces the eye of an artist—portfolios bursting with their lovely contents, glasses filled with fresh roses on tables and stands, a careless well-harmonised pell-mell of *bric-à-brac*, china, brushes, colours, palettes, picture-frames, and unfinished canvases. The owner of the studio is seated in its midst, dressed in black, holding on his knees a portfolio, whence he extracts drawings to show a visitor of some importance, who has honoured him with a call. One of the designs represents Samson, a composition made by Meissonier for an edition of Bossuet's *Histoire Universelle*. A portrait hung upon the wall is a likeness of Meissonier himself. The entire picture, that contains so much, is thirty-eight centimètres high and twenty-nine wide. The most famous of the many 'Bravi' painted by the master is that in the possession of Sir Richard Wallace, the largest owner of Meissonier pictures in Europe. We all had a chance of seeing it at Bethnal Green in 1872. It represents two hired assassins in an attitude of strained suspense, waiting for their victim to emerge from a door in front of them. Men better snited to their wretched task could not have been selected. The one, who is evidently no novice, is armed with a short Swiss sword. He bends close to the keyhole of the door to hear better, and, with his hand, signs to his less experienced comrade, whose resolution he seems to fear might fail him at the critical juncture. No less famous, no less perfect in finish, is 'La Rixe,' lent by the Queen. It was first exhibited in 1855, and was the

Emperor Napoleon's truly imperial gift to Prince Albert. It is one of the ornaments of the Buckingham Palace Gallery. The title might be translated as the 'Tavern Row.' From the costumes, we gather that the scene is laid early in the seventeenth century in some Paris tavern, frequented by the idle and quarrelsome retainers of the great lords of the period. Two of these men have fallen out over their cards and drink, and are resorting to arms to settle their dispute. Their comrades intervene, try to tear them asunder, and wrench their weapons out of their hands. The floor is strewn with tables, cards, glasses, jugs, in wild confusion. The figures are instinct with life and action. As a drawing, it is, perhaps, the most flawless that has come from Meissonier's brush. Not a detail is lost, not a feature omitted. The picture brilliantly refuted the assertion of Meissonier's early adversaries, who contended that he could not paint movement.

It is not often that Meissonier paints portraits. We have, however, a goodly collection here of those he has made. It is not, perhaps, his *forte*, but his truthfulness and care tell well in this nature of work. Here are the artist's wife and daughter painted, seated in the summer studio of their illustrious husband and father, for Meissonier has two work-rooms—one in Paris and one for the hot months in the environs. Further on, he is himself painted on horseback, riding towards Antibes in the French Maritime Alps, one of his favourite resorts. We behold the town in the background. Not far off hang his friend the publicist, John Lemoinne and his grandchildren. In painting the latter Meissonier has somewhat cast off the hard-

ness and hotness of colour with which he is not unjustly reproached, and there is a warmth of feeling about it such as is not usual to him. He evidently prefers to take the portraits only of those he knows well. All those, with one exception, at the Rue de Sèze are friends—Dumas *filis*, Hetzel the publisher, the sculptor Gemitto. The two latter were gifts to the persons portrayed, and bear inscriptions to that effect. Gemitto is represented as in the act of modelling in clay a statuette of Meissonier. He is standing; one hand rests on the table on which he has placed his almost finished sketch; with the other he holds his modelling-tool up to his mouth. He is clearly sunk in deep contemplation of his model, to see if he has well done his work.

But if Meissonier does not greatly care for painting portraits *per se*, he is specially fond of introducing them into his pictures. Thus, one of his innumerable 'Chess-players,' that dated 1858, contains pictures of several of his friends and relatives. 'An Engraver' bears the features of his son Charles, who seems likely to step worthily in his father's footprints. Indeed, this son seems frequently to have served as a model. A remarkable work, that, as a rule, never quits Meissonier's Parisian studio, is also on view in the Rue de Sèze. It is the miniature portrait of Thiers, taken at St. Germain at seven o'clock in the morning of September 4th, 1877, the great statesman having expired upon the anniversary of Sedan—that cruel day that brought such deep humiliation upon the country he loved! A French critic has well described it as 'a head with closed eyes, an expression of irony still remaining about the lines of the mouth,

and of sarcasm or banter upon the waxen and motionless face, the silvery-gray colour of the hair responding to the tone of the white drapery.'

It is quite a peculiar feature of Meissonier's art that he has persistently avoided female subjects. The beauty and grace of women, usually so seductive to an artist's brush, have had no fascination for his pencil. There is, however, here one portrait of a lady and one picture in which a woman figures—a picture painted as a gift for Alexandre Dumas *filis*, and representing that strange scene in his novel *L'Afrique Clémenceau*, in which the wife poses for the statue of a nymph her husband wishes to model. Once, and once only, has the artist still further deviated from his groove, and that is with the picture of a Madonna. The work was painted during a recent visit at Venice, and the artist evidently succumbed to the influences of his surroundings; and, living among pictures and statues of Madonnas, was inspired to paint something of a like kind himself. It represents the image known as the 'Madonna di Bacio,' one of the most popular Virgin images in the Lagoon city, before which no true Venetian and good Catholic would pass without saying a brief prayer and touching the marble with his lips. The stone has grown worn with this usage. In Meissonier's picture we see a young woman prostrate with grief praying earnestly before the image, while close by, at another altar, a priest is seated, placidly reading his Breviary. His back is turned to us and to the woman, and he has no notion of the drama of a broken heart that is going on behind him. Except for the exquisite finish of the handling, no one would, at first sight, suspect

this picture of being a Meissonier. For graphic characterisation, perhaps, nothing in the present collection surpasses 'La Lecture chez Diderot,' well named 'the pictorial epitome of an epoch,' in which, upon a tiny canvas, we behold the faces of a whole group of those seventeenth-century philosophers to whom we are more or less indebted for our modern largeness and independence of thought—D'Alembert, Holbach, Grimm, not to forget Diderot himself, who stands in the foreground, leaning upon a chair, which he is balancing to and fro.

Of the many pictures that adorn this gallery, scenes limned in the space of a few square inches, who shall name or describe them all! It is time we hurried on to look at the Napoleonic cycle, which disputes together with these costume pieces Meissonier's claim to fame. But before we pass from them for good, a word must be said about the refined or subtle humour that often lurks in these *genre* pictures—a humour at times a little too subtle, too subdued for the mass to comprehend. Such humour lurks in the 'Amateurs of Painting,' dated 1860, in which an artist, seated at his easel, listens with resignation and patience to the contradictory criticisms and unsolicited advice of some amateur friends. We only gain a clue as to his feelings by the pictures hung upon the wall, of which one represents the martyrdom of St. Lawrence, and the other the well-known fable of the miller, his son, and his donkey. Mention must also be made of the smallest picture painted by this painter *par excellence* of small pictures. It would go into a five-franc piece, and yet is full of space and distance. It represents two worthy Dutch burghers, who are dis-

cussing at a tavern the news of the siege of Bergen-op-Zoom. Nor must that masterpiece of light-effects, 'The Portrait of the Sergeant,' pass unnoted. In it a group of soldiers, dressed in the light uniform faced with blue of the period of Louis XVI., surround an artist who is busy sketching their sergeant. The man poses with dignity and self-consciousness, the admired of all admirers. The different expressions of the men, reflecting their astonishment and criticisms, are dexterously rendered; but what makes this work take rank among Meissonier's *chef-d'œuvres* is that it is one of the most daring experiments of painting light that can be seen in modern art. The sergeant stands out in the open by himself, literally bathed in light.

It is said that Adolf Menzel's Frederick the Great pictures first inspired Meissonier with the thought to be the pictorial historian of the national hero of France. In a series of eight pictures he has illustrated the life history of the First Emperor from the defeat of the Austrians at Lodi in 1796 to the retreat from Russia in 1814.

Of these the most important and popular, the '1807,' is unhappily absent from this exhibition, owing to the fact that it is owned by Mr. Stewart of New York, and the monstrous new American tariff laws rendering its temporary loan a practical impossibility. Its absence is in some measure compensated for by the exhibition of sixty-seven careful and brilliant studies made by the artist for this picture, upon which he worked for fifteen years. Only by thus looking into his workshop, so to speak, can we gain an idea of the care and minute patience with which this master works. Thus he models in wax all the horses

and men introduced into his works, besides which, all the figures are drawn from the life. When painting his '1814,' the hapless retreat from Russia, he borrowed Napoleon's identical coat from the museum, had it copied with Chinese exactitude, crease for crease and button for button, dressed himself in it, and then sat mounted on a wooden horse, saddled in imitation of the Emperor's white charger, upon the housetop on a gloomy day in winter amid falling snow. In this attitude, with a mirror before him, he painted in the sombre tints of the winter sky on the flesh of the face, and the flakes of snow on the coat-sleeves. He also prepared in his studio, with infinite pains, an arrangement of a miniature landscape strewn with white powder resembling snow, and tumbrils and wagons on heavy wheels, which he drew through the lanes of his powdered landscape, that he might study the furrows, the fall and deposit of the scattered snow, at leisure. For 'La Rixe,' in which the anger-strained muscles of the neck of one of the combatants form a chief feature, he actually fastened his model with a rope to the wall, and made him strain away from it with all his might. The man could not keep up the tension at the extreme point for more than a few seconds, but Meissonier made him do it until he had mastered the set of the muscles, and could reproduce them at will. Instances of his minuteness and thoroughness could be multiplied *ad infinitum*. Nor has he neglected to read the literature of the period he paints. He strives in all ways to saturate himself with reality; and to his glory and honour be it told, no picture has ever left his studio that has not had all the pains and labour and energy bestowed on it that it is

his to bestow. In these Napoleonic pictures, all painted on Meissonier's tiny scale, he has proved himself on the level of those historical painters who depict history upon canvases of gigantic dimensions.

The war of 1870-71 was an intense grief to Meissonier, and in the end the veteran painter actually took up arms in the defence of his fatherland. To this we owe 'Les Tuileries, July 1871,' in which the ruins of the imperial residence are seen. Conspicuous amid them are two shields that the flames have spared, bearing respectively the suggestive names of Marengo and Austerlitz. In the background we perceive the quadriga of the Goddess of Victory, that surmounts the Arc de Triomphe. She appears to be driving away her steeds. Below this mournful picture is written, 'Gloria majorum per flammas usque superstes.' To this period also belongs the large sketch of a picture painted at Poissy in 1871, when Meissonier's house was crowded with German officers. To escape their company and to give vent to his sorrow and rage he threw upon the canvas this vivid and sorrowful allegory. It is named simply 'Paris, 1870-1871.' The artist depicts her as a woman clad in a lion's skin, enveloped in a veil of mourning. She is defending herself against the enemy, with her soldiers and her dying grouped round a tattered flag. Hovering in the air above them, with the Prussian eagle by her side, floats Famine—wan and weird—Famine who accomplished the work that the bombardment had failed to achieve. There are many portraits in this picture. Among them we recognise that of the gifted painter, Henri Regnault, who, as we all know, died in the defence of Paris. He is repre-

sented on this canvas as expiring at the feet of the veiled figure of Lutetia.

We have said that little is known of Meissonnier's private life, but his two houses are among the sights of Paris to those privileged to behold them. One is in the Boulevard Malesherbes, that quarter of Paris affected by the art school popularly known as *du Bank-note*; the other, as we have already said, is at Poissy. Meissonnier has built his own houses from the very foundations, and they have cost him many millions, since he has insisted that the work should be done as he does his own—that is to say, with all thoroughness and of the very best materials. No scamped labour must be done for a man who never scamps. With pride he tells his visitor that his house has scarcely settled an inch since the foundations were laid. Even down to the furniture, the silver table services—everything is from Meissonnier's own designs. The

style of architecture is that of the Italian Renaissance. There are two studios—the larger one, which is enormous, serving as the anteroom to the smaller, into which the shy artist retreats before company. At Poissy there are also two studios, but not adjacent, one being at the top of the house for outdoor studies. In the Poissy house we notice those quaint little square windows which so often figure in the background of his pictures.

When Meissonnier's *Souvenirs* are at last given to the world, they cannot fail to be interesting reading. Meanwhile, as aids to knowledge of the man, we have his works, and we shall doubtless find, when we come to possess the history of his life, that these are as characteristic as one might, even without this data, argue them to be. The jubilee exhibition of his pictures is certainly a noteworthy landmark of his life, and one that well merits all the interest it has aroused.

AN EVENING AT 'THE HEALTHERIES.'

I WAS strolling up Piccadilly one hot Thursday afternoon in June, on my way home from the Temple, when, stopping to look at some prints in a shop-window, I saw to my astonishment, standing inside, a man—an old school and college chum—whom I had not seen since he went out to Australia four years before. Entering the shop as he completed his purchases, a most cordial greeting ensued. Jack Bayton had not altered a bit—cheery and full of fun as of yore. We strolled up towards the Park together; but, as he had an appointment to keep at his club, we parted at the 'Corner,' not, however, until I had extracted a promise from him to come and dine with me that same evening.

A newly married man, like a child with a new toy, is always anxious to exhibit his precious treasure, together with the house he keeps it in, to stray bachelor friends, and I was no exception to the rule. Maggie and I had been married a little over a year, and of course I was as proud as a peacock of my new possessions.

'Ah, my dear,' I said, after our usual hug, as I met the little woman in the hall, 'I have got an old chum coming to dine with us to-night. An awfully critical fellow, Maggie; so put on your "best bib and tucker," and have everything ready. I must go now, and look after the wine.'

Punctually at seven o'clock, Jack Bayton put in an appearance at Compton Gardens, and five minutes later found us comfortably seated at table. Always

a good talker, Jack's Australian experiences furnished him with an ample fund of conversation, and we gave him full license. On he rattled, leaving Maggie and myself little else to do than look after his bodily wants, and laugh at the droll descriptions he gave of his Antipodean adventures.

Gradually, however, he neared home; and, with the dessert, the conversation came round to 'auld lang syne,' when I in my turn became monopolist. I told of Jones who had gone on the stage, of Brown who had married a fortune, and of Robertson whose last book was the talk of the town, and so on, until most of the old friends had been passed in review.

'By the bye,' said Jack, during a temporary lull, 'do you ever see anything of Clinton?—Cocoatina Clinton, as we called him at Harrow. I heard yesterday that he had followed your good example, Frank, and is living almost next door to you in Bellevue Terrace.'

Now, why does Fate always decree that, on certain occasions, when one is particularly anxious not to have So-and-so's name mentioned, his or her name is sure to be brought up?

Bobbie Clinton and I had been fairly good friends before we both married, and were so now, for the matter of that; but our respective spouses, for some feminine reasons of their own, had taken a violent dislike to each other. For my part, I liked Mrs. Clinton, and thought her quite a charming person. But Maggie did not; in fact, she had on several occasions confided to me her astonishment

at 'such a nice man' as Clinton falling in love with 'that silly little creature;' so that, beyond the mere conventionalities of social life, we did not see much of the Clintons, and *vice versa*.

At the mention of Mrs. Clinton's name, I saw Maggie's pretty face assume an expressive frown; so I stopped further remarks on Jack's part by a gentle kick, a hint which happily he took, and changed the subject of talk by asking him what we should do after dinner.

'Let Mrs. Murayne decide for us,' replied he.

'As you like,' said I; 'but I was going to propose the club and billiards.'

'We can't very well do that, Frank,' said Jack; 'why, your wife will be left all alone.'

'O, I really don't mind, Mr. Bayton,' put in Maggie; 'besides, I have a small niece staying with me who is capital company in her childish way, and I daresay you and Frank have heaps of secrets to talk over.'

'Obliging little woman,' said I, as I blew her a kiss.

Coffee over, Jack and I put on our hats, and, with a parting salute to Maggie, we strolled down into Cromwell Road.

By Jove! it was a lovely night.

An idea struck me, 'The Healtheries.' Had Jack been there, I wonder! if not, it was just the place to go to, an evening like this. A weed in the cool air was certainly preferable to a hot billiard-room.

'Have you been to the Healtheries yet, Jack? I asked.

'Healtheries! O yes—no, I have not; but I suppose one ought to go, though, for the—'

'Go! certainly you ought, and especially as you are fond of good music. It is close at hand; so what do you say to turning in

there instead of going on to the club?

'Right you are, old man!' said he; and with that, we headed for Exhibition Road.

Little did I reckon of what the Fates had in store for me. Paying our money, we passed into the brilliantly-lighted building. The effect produced by the long lines of electric light was alone worth seeing, and so my companion seemed to think. A little time spent in looking about, and out we go into the gardens.

Crowds of people, well-dressed and otherwise, throng the large grounds, seated about in groups under the lime-trees, or revolving in an apparently endless stream around the rotunda; talking, flirting, quarrelling, according to their several fancies. Two world-renowned bands, one at either rotunda, are striving to excel each other in their rendering of famous music. Hosts of Chinese lanterns of all colours glimmer through the foliage of the chestnut-trees, and hang in festoons around the miniature lakes, in whose shallow depths they appear mirrored as if illuminating a subaqueous world; while strings of lesser lights encircle the grass-plots, and mark the border of the paths. Truly a picture as pretty and effective as it is un-English.

After some hunting, enlivened by altercations with watchful custodians of vacant chairs, we discovered a couple of seats, and drawing up near to the band, we lit our cigars.

'Hallo!' said Jack, as the last bars of the 'Turkish Patrol' died away amidst a storm of applause. 'Why, bless my soul, there is the very man we were speaking about at dinner, when you shut me up so unceremoniously. Ah, he's coming this way; if you don't mind, I'll go and speak to him.'

Before I could reply he was off; but almost directly afterwards he came marching back, accompanied by Clinton and, rather to my annoyance, his wife.

'How d'ye do, Murayne?' said the former, as I raised my hat to Mrs. Clinton. 'You and Bayton haven't been long in finding one another out. Why, he tells me he only arrived home on Monday.'

Mrs. Clinton expressing a wish to sit down, after some trouble a couple more chairs were annexed, and Jack thoughtlessly pairing off with Clinton, his wife was left to me.

We conversed, not perhaps in the most easy manner, rather by jerks, for, to tell the truth, I felt extremely guilty. Here was I sitting side by side, nay more, actually talking to the chosen antipathy of the wife of my bosom. Thank goodness, she was safe at home—reading, no doubt. I looked at my watch—only a quarter past nine. I must make an effort. I did so, and as time wore on the conversation became less and less strained, and assumed a gayer—on Mrs. Clinton's part rather confidential—tone.

Really, now, to an unprejudiced person like myself, she appeared to be a charming little creature.

'Shall we stroll over to that charming band?' broke in Jack.

'O, do let us,' said my fair companion. 'I think the playing of those Germans just too delightful.'

Clinton having assented, we arose from our seats, which, almost before we were fairly on our legs, were seized and borne away by sundry lynx-eyed prowlers in search of the same, and made our way towards the other music. How sweet the strains of the 'Lorelei' sounded as we approached! Not a seat to be had

here, of course; so, in despair, we joined the ranks of the promenaders slowly circling around the band. Decidedly Maggie was mistaken in her estimate of Mrs. Clinton. Dear little Maggie, I must certainly try and heal the breach between them.

At that moment the music ceased, and some remark made by Mrs. Clinton caused me to look up. Was I dreaming? There, not twenty yards off, and approaching us, was—my wife! Yes, it certainly was Maggie, and with her brother Dick too, of all people. He must have called at the house after I had left ostensibly for the club.

It would never do for her to see me here, and with Mrs. Clinton too. The consequences would be quite terrible. Evidently they had not noticed us as yet. Stepping forward, I touched Jack on the shoulder.

'My wife!' I gasped, glancing in her direction; and quitting Mrs. Clinton's side, I endeavoured to hide myself against the side of the rotunda.

It struck me at the time as being a move something akin to that of the ostrich when hard pressed, but it was really all I could do, as a double row of chairs effectually prevented my escaping away under the trees. By Jove! this was the last straw. Why, Mrs. Clinton was actually following me, evidently unaware that I was supposed to be hiding. What was to be done? In another second or so Maggie would be abreast of where I was standing; she would see Mrs. Clinton, and then—

Ah! a brilliant idea strikes me, as the steps leading up to the floor of the rotunda catch my eye. An idea as brilliant, forsooth, as it was bold. If I could get up there I might not be noticed; the

safety of the position would actually lie in its conspicuousness. Turning my coat-collar up, whereupon Mrs. Clinton kindly inquired if I felt cold, and bending my head down, I stepped forward, and sprang up the rotunda steps, just in time, however, to meet face to face the colossal bandmaster, who was about to descend. Taken by surprise, all I could do was to gaze blankly at him. I dare not turn round.

'Was wollen sie, mein herr? Wunschen sie mit mir sprechen?' interrogated the German.

'Ya, ya!' replied I, stammering forth a torrent of what, judging from the look of surprise on the countenance of the stalwart Teuton, was to him incomprehensible German. Seeing he did not quite understand, I paused.

'Uncle Frank, what are you doing up there? Come down; aunty is here,' quoth a childish treble from below.

I started; surely I recognised that voice. Glancing down, I saw that I was not mistaken. It was she, Tottie, Maggie's little niece. I was indeed sore beset. Another glance. Yes, there she was, standing at the side of the steps, looking eagerly up at me. I must escape her at all hazards; I must get home.

Strange to say, it never struck me that, no longer with Mrs. Clinton, I might meet Maggie with impunity. Turning round, catching sight as I did so of Mrs. Clinton walking away with her husband, a look of amazement and anger on her face, I took the steps three at a time, and reaching the bottom in safety, I rushed wildly away through the crowd. Cannoning with great force against a man, who, as I made off, struck at me with his stick and succeeded in sweeping my hat off my head, I darted

through a friendly opening in the row of seats. But, tripping up over an outstretched leg, I pitched on to an elderly lady who was sitting half asleep on her chair. Picking myself up, before a young man who was with her had time to seize me, I was off again, with a cry of 'Police!' ringing in my ears.

In spite of my fall, I had by now sufficiently collected my wits to steer more cautiously, and while making my way rapidly towards one of the entrances, I stopped for a moment to catch my breath beside one of the illuminated ponds. No sooner had I done so, than I caught sight of a policeman heading straight for where I was standing. Good heavens! did he mistake me for a pick-pocket? Not a moment was to be lost; so darting round the corner of a neighbouring refreshment booth, I entered the main building.

My disordered dress, dusty face, and bare head occasioned considerable surprise. Twice I thought I should be stopped; however, the Fates were propitious, and I managed to pass through and into the gardens again on the other side in safety. Gaining the entrance, I was out in the street before the gatekeeper, who knew me, had time to identify me. Hailing a hansom, I jumped in. Had Maggie seen me? Had she seen Bayton? How to convince Tottie that it was not I she had seen on the rotunda steps? All these queries passed through my mind as the cab took me home.

Compton Gardens at last; that was something to be thankful for. My latch-key, where was it? I fumbled, first in one pocket and then in the other. Surely I had not dropped it! A cold perspiration broke out over my brow at the very thought. Ah, here it is.

Really, I was beginning to get quite hysterical. Opening the hall-door gently, as the cabby, with a broad grin on his face, drove off, I slipped into the dining-room, and administered unto myself a stiff glass of brandy.

In the act of drinking, I caught sight of my reflection in the mirror. A scratched nose, swollen temple, dusty clothes, and minus a tie. What a contrast to the spick and span individual who had left that room only a few hours before!

What is that noise! One of the servants coming up from the kitchen. She must not see me. Rapidly crossing the hall, I bolted up stairs and into my dressing-room. What was the best thing to do! Go to bed at once and pretend to be ill! Yes, that's what I must do. Maggie would be home almost directly, and I must have some tale ready to tell her when she arrived.

Slipping off my dusty garments, and hiding them under the hip-bath, I washed my face, and wrapping a wet towel around my head for the sake of effect, I turned down the gas and crawled into bed.

Ugh! how that fall had shaken me! I felt stiff all over, and my heart was thumping away against my ribs as if it were beating its way out.

Ah, there goes the front door. A confused murmur of voices. I can distinguish Maggie's, Dick's, Jack's. O, then she must know all! Woe unto me!

A door is banged to. I hear footsteps on the stairs. Curling myself up in the bedclothes, I covered my head with the sheet and waited. Somebody crosses the room; a hand is laid on my head. It is she, my wife!

'Are you ill, Frank dear? Why, what is this round your

head? Shall I send for the doctor? I am so sorry I went out, dear; but Dick called for me after you left, and took me to the Healtheries.' (Now for it!) 'We met Mr. Bayton there! (Ah!) 'and he told us that you had left him and come home, feeling unwell. Poor boy, are you very bad?'

She had not seen me, then! Joy, rapture! It was with difficulty that I restrained myself from jumping up and capering round the room.

'Well done, Jack; what a brick you are!' I thought. 'I am in your debt for this, old fellow.'

The rôle I had assumed must be kept up, however, as, in a weak voice, I replied,

'Ah, Maggie dear, I am so glad you've come back. I did feel very unwell, dear, before you came; but I feel much better now' (so I did, after what I had just heard). 'You need not send for the doctor, dear, at least at present.'

Knock-knock at the door.

'Come in,' said Maggie.

There was a slight pause, followed by a sort of shuffling noise, and in walked Jack Bayton, followed by Dick.

'How are you feeling now, old fellow?' said the former, in a bedside sort of voice. 'I shouldn't have let you come home alone, if I had thought you were so unwell.'

The arch-hypocrite! A wink of gratitude from under a corner of the damp towel was my answer.

'Uncle Frank'—this in Tottie's small voice, as, having slipped into the room unawares, she jumped on to the bed and gave me a sympathetic kiss—'is you very bad? We've been to the Fisheries—aunty, uncle Dick, and I; and I saw such a funny man

there, uncle Frank, just like you. When I spoke to him he ran away.'

'Yes,' said Maggie, 'Tottis got such a funny idea into her head—was positive that you were there, and ran away from her. In fact, I believe she is still doubtful on the subject.'

¶ 'Well, do you know, Frank,' said Dick, laughing, 'I too thought I saw you once, rushing wildly

through the crowd without a hat. You must have a double, old man.'

'Hum! you don't say so, Dick,' replied I, in a grave tone. 'It is really a very extraordinary thing. I wonder who this man could have been' with a wink at Jack.

'All's well that ends well,' thought I to myself; and so ended my evening at the Healtheries.

C. R. W.

A SKETCHER'S CORNER.

I KNOW a place far up the stream,
No longer teased by fickle tide,
Where golden carp and silver bream
Along its banks in numbers glide.

There moss and sweet forget-me-not
Show foreground rich with many a shade,
And spreading inward from that spot,
Form carpet for a forest glade.

A streak of silver down the hill
Far distant leaps in haste to meet
The sheet of water that so still
Does lazy lapping at our feet.

Say, fisher, will you come with me,
And whip the sober water's breast?
So sitting 'neath the willow-tree,
We two may find an age of rest.

A. BERRY.

A PARSON'S EXPERIENCES OF WEDDINGS.

I SUPPOSE that parish parsons have experience of weddings more than any other class of men that can be named. The clerks of the parish are probably of opinion that their services are at least equally essential, but, like the Pelagians, they do vainly talk. The parson's connection with weddings, indeed, often commences at a much earlier date than might ordinarily be supposed. There is often a kind of unconscious directorate, or confessional, for restless people in these matters. An anxious parent may come to the clergyman to know his estimate of a suitor's character; and I know a case where the anxious maiden comes to ask if she is bound by an old promise which she now regrets. A clergyman who bears an active part in the organisation of a parish, with his classes, and choir-meetings, and social festivities, is able to take a comprehensive view of what is going on before his eyes, and, indeed, is not able to divest himself of a very serious sense of responsibility, as matters come within his knowledge and observation unknown to persons greatly interested. Moreover, all the gossip of a parish naturally floats in his direction, and unless he resolutely seals his lips at tea-parties, he might unwittingly promote a great deal of scandal. He gets the first authentic tidings of a marriage when a message comes to him to put up the banns, or, if he is a surrogate, when the future bridegroom comes over to purchase a license. Occasionally he feels very much inclined to tell the young people to

go away and not to be so foolish. For the most part, however, the cleric is very human indeed. He feels a natural sympathy on the side of marriage, and considers it his function to rejoice with those who rejoice, especially on the occasion of a marriage festivity. He has the happiness to crown the work. The friends and the lawyers have settled all the details, possibly not without a measure of acrimonious controversy, but with him rests the pleasant work of simply giving his benison, signing the registry, and sending the allied people away to make the best of their bargain. He may, nevertheless, be permitted to have occasional doubts of the reality of the blessing, when May is wedded to December, or gilded youth mates the girl of the period. For instance, he knows that Benedict, when a suitor, did his wooing something in this fashion: 'O yes, I last met you at the Eton and Harrow match. And talking about matches, suppose that you and I make a match? I mean get married.' The young lady replies, 'By all means let us do so; it will be such a jolly lark.' Such a marriage is not done 'soberly, seriously, and advisedly,' as Mother Church charitably supposes to be the case. As a rule there is no want of seriousness with the elder people to whom the gay couple belong. They entirely fail to see the matter in the light of a joke. The parson, who knows the chart of life, who sees the long highway with all its avenues ahead, does a little bit of private moralising, to which he has no

right to give public expression. Sometimes he even feels like the Vicar of Wakefield, who, when the young people giggle so much, is afraid that we shall not be married at all this morning.

It is very remarkable, considering how weddings in the Church of England are conducted, according to set forms and formularies, that there is, nevertheless, so much room for variety in the conduct of this momentous ceremony. Practically it is found that all over the country there are variations in ritual, and no one service is exactly like another service. The simplest type of marriage is the bucolic, where a party of four persons present themselves, just enough to fill the fly hired for the occasion, consisting of the bride and bridegroom, the man who is to give the bride away, and the young woman who is in attendance on the bride. I recollect a case in which there was a carriage full without the bride, and it was not until the party had been waiting in the church for a long time that it was recollected that that young person was essential for the ceremony, when the fly was sent back for her, and she was discovered in a state of combined splendour and perplexity. The two extra persons are wanted to sign as witnesses. The father of the bride does not usually present himself, probably through the want of new clothes, and the bride's mother stays at home cooking the wedding dinner. It is not too much to say that the great bulk of marriages in this country are of this humble type. There is something still lowlier, when the parish clerk gives away the bride, and the sextoness joins him in signing the register, and cheering up the poor girl's spirits. On the simple basis of the old-fashioned ceremony we proceed to one stage

after another of social grandeur and ecclesiastical ornament. Unless by special license, all marriages were bound to come off before the hour of noon. According to the special licenses, for which a large sum was charged, a marriage might be celebrated at any hour or any place. The law is now changed, and the marriage may be celebrated at any time; but the popular mind responds very slowly to any change, and the knowledge which people at large possess of any change wrought by Act of Parliament is very limited. The time will long continue some hour before noon, increasingly approaching noon itself. In cases where the marriage has been in the afternoon, a high tea has been prosperously substituted for the wedding breakfast. From the simple office to the grandeur of St. George's Chapel, Windsor, there are transitions of every intermediate stage of comparative or superlative pomp, the variations exhibiting a curious history of contemporary manners. A clergyman is never surprised to see any variety in the arrangements of the brides and their maids. Eight bridesmaids were the grand customary number, but now there is a run upon the number three. Sometimes there is a principal bridesmaid, who is in advance of the attendant nymphs; and there is a great idea at the present time, when children are unnaturally developed on every side, to thrust them into a place of honour as bridesmaids. If our parson be a secularly-minded man, he may devote much interest and observation to the bridesmaids' apparel, which is at times almost a uniform, with identical locketts or bracelets, the gifts of the groom. There is a great distinction in the services, which may be very plain or decidedly ritualistic. Some-

times the ceremony takes place in the body of the church, where the marriage-party is grouped with much scenic effect; but more generally they proceed to the front of the 'communion-rails,' which is more popularly known as 'the altar,' although, as a matter of fact, that term is nowhere to be found in the service for the occasion. In a very large proportion of marriages beyond the working class, the clergyman of the parish frequently does not officiate, unless he is a very old friend of the family's. The bride or bridegroom wishes that the marriage should be performed by some near relation or intimate friend. The matter rests with the clergyman of the parish, and his consent has always to be asked. It would be thought extremely churlish for any incumbent to refuse such a request. Of course the fees always go to the vicar. In most marriages above a certain social level the offering made generally much exceeds the legal fee. On the happy occasion of a marriage the stiffest purse-strings are relaxed, and a good deal of money is flying about. There are a great many people, both in the church and outside, who have 'to be remembered.'

A clergyman one day happening to lose his train in one of our Midland towns, walked about the place, and seeing a handsome old church open, entered to inspect it. It so happened that a marriage was just finishing, which he witnessed with considerable sympathy and approval. Presently a gaily-apparelled gentleman approached him, and, taking him affectionately by the hand, said, 'My dear sir, my dear sir!' and pressed into his palm several sovereigns. The clergyman gently extricated himself, and explained that he was a total stranger in the

town, and had only entered the church by accident.

'My dear sir, my dear sir,' said the gentleman, 'I am surely right in taking you for a clergyman of the Church of England!'

'Certainly I am.'

'Then, my dear sir, do not on this joyful occasion be so harsh as to refuse our little offering.'

With characteristic amiability the unknown clergyman eventually assented to accept the sovereigns. All fees given in the church are the belongings of the incumbent. It sometimes seems hard upon a curate, when he has received a heavy fee from a bridegroom, which would make him all the easier and happier, to be obliged to refund it to the incumbent. A little consideration will show that no real hardship is involved. A considerable part of the income of the living is made up of fees, and, in any case, when the incumbent took the living and when the curate took the curacy, there was a full understanding that the incumbent was, and the curate was not, to take the fees. A special case of hardship may sometimes be involved when the officiating clergyman has come a great way, and it has really been the intention that he, and not the incumbent, should be the recipient of the offering. Bridegrooms should understand that everything given in the church goes to the incumbent, and if they wish their gift to go to their friend, they should settle the legal dues in the vestry and send their gift privately. Even clergymen themselves do not altogether understand this custom until they gain a little experience. There was a curate who, to his great delight, received some very solid offerings during his vicar's absence from town, and was considerably chagrined when he was

called upon to account for them. Parson A. tells me that in early days he was called upon by a kinsman to make a long, expensive journey to officiate at the marriage of a daughter. To his considerable dismay he saw a settlement effected with the clerk, and he himself was apparently left out in the cold. The layman was better acquainted with church law than he was, and in a few days' time sent him a substantial cheque—an example which officiating clergymen will consider to be eminently deserving of encouragement. Parsons, as much as gamekeepers, ought to 'touch paper' on suitable occasions. Still, there are many cases in which even the low fee of seven-and-sixpence acts as a bar to matrimony. According to any principles of political economy, a man who cannot afford a fee cannot afford to have a wife. The mass of the labouring population, however advanced in the doctrines of rights and strikes, are not familiar with the teachings of political economy. Those cases are numerous in which the parson remits the fee, that the woman may obtain her legal rights and a respectable name.

In nineteen cases out of twenty the marriages take place by banns, for which sixpence each time of asking is the customary fee. This is thought the true 'churchy' method. The original idea of banns was to give every publicity to an intended marriage. At the present day, banns form a better method of concealing than of publishing. Most of the clandestine marriages that come to pass are managed through the agency of banns. In a large parish a great many names have to be given out, constituting, indeed, an integral portion of the services. Sometimes the names are not very distinctly written; oftener they

are not very distinctly read. It is often very hard to discriminate and to identify a name. One of the sons of George I. was married by banns, under the unassuming name of Guelph, one of the proceedings which led up to the Marriage Act. Still, young ladies of High Church proclivities give a decided preference to banns. The servant-maids are often shy, and will not go to church when their banns are read, while their young mistresses, under similar circumstances, listen with much composure. We have known young curates read out their own banns with great emphasis and unction. Singularly enough, the clergy often make a great mistake in reading out banns, which sometimes has occasioned ludicrous results, and for which there is no excuse. Some clergymen have got into the inveterate habit of saying, 'If any of you know of any cause or just impediment why these two persons should not be joined together in holy matrimony, ye are *now* to declare it.' The word '*now*' is an interpolation. It does not occur in the Ordinal. The result has been that people have been known to get up in church at the very moment, and forbid the banns. The proper thing is for the objectors to go into the vestry after service and state their reasons. In nearly every case the reason alleged is the fact of one or both of the parties being minors, or in a few instances it may be a case of prohibited degrees. In the case of a minority the objection is very generally withdrawn, or the young people put up their banns in one church after another until the event can come off without detection. In marriages by ordinary license, one of the parties must have resided for fourteen days in the parish where the

marriage is to be celebrated. No evidence is tendered of this fact. The statement is at once accepted. We are informed by a registrar that there have been a great many falsehoods told in these matters of residence, which is not the happiest way of commencing married life. Deliberate false statements are rare, but they are not unknown, as all readers of the newspapers are aware, serving frequently to invalidate the marriage rite, and subjecting the offenders to severe penalties.

There is a total dearth of violent scenes at marriages at the present day. The mind of Shakespeare seems to have been familiar with them. He makes Petruchio upset both the priest and his book, and Claudio renounces Hero at the altar in a manner beyond any modern parallel. I have read in the newspapers of a man being arrested on the way to the church, and of a bride eloping directly afterwards. In the church itself there is a decorous solemnity. How well Charles Dickens has described the marriages in *Dombey*, in *David Copperfield*, and in *Great Expectations*! Sometimes, however, there is a *contretemps*, or an approach to it. We grieve to say that sometimes the clergyman himself is the cause. In some large parishes, it has frequently happened there is quite a mob of people to be married. The whole rail is thronged with them. There is a liability for the brides and bridegrooms to get considerably 'mixed.' It is at a time like this that the services of a parish clerk are seen to be very useful; but if that important functionary is absent, or if there is an inexperienced clergyman, the fact has been known that the wrong people have got married. This is not the only kind of clerical blunder that

may be stated; in many churches there is a pew known as 'the churching pew,' and careless curates have been known to church straight off any lady who may have wandered into this pew undesignedly. This sort of accident is not so uncommon; I have known it happen within my own experience. I remember the case of a clergyman, who, by taking a case of ecclesiastical law into his own hands, laid himself open to a tremendous retort. When he asked the name of a child in baptism, the godmother gave some extremely fine name—'Letitia Adelina Angelina,' or some such group of names. 'Mary,' calmly said the parson, and so baptised her. The father followed the parson into the vestry. 'I hope you will not mind the alteration I have made,' said the vicar. 'I think it will prove very useful to the child in after life—so many names are a mistake.' 'All I have got to say,' said the parent, 'is that you have made my child a liar whenever she repeats her Catechism.' 'How so?' 'Why, she will have to say that her name was given her by her godfather and godmothers, when it was nothing of the sort, and was only given her by the parson.'

When the wrong people have got married—an event which is reported to have happened more than once, though I have never known an authentic case—it is said that a considerable bewilderment subsequently arose as to what had best be done. The parson is said to have advised them 'to settle it among yourselves.' Some very literal people might consider themselves bound by the lot so strangely apportioned to them, but the doctrine of 'intention' would settle the matter by allowing correct entries in the church books. As we are

speaking both of the oddities of the chief actors and the irregularities of the parson, some further notes may be made. It is not necessary to go back to the times of the famous or infamous Fleet marriages. There was a clergyman who married a couple, and at the wedding breakfast one of the bridesmaids expressed a wish to see that mystic document a wedding license, which she had never beheld in her lifetime. The request occasioned a fearful discovery. The clergyman had quite forgotten to ask for the license; the bridegroom had left it to his 'best man' to procure it, and this the 'best man' had forgotten to do. Of course, the marriage was no legal marriage at all. The wedding-party broke up in dismay, and the ceremony was performed again next day. The poor clergyman, however, never got over the effects of his blunder. On another occasion a clergyman got himself into considerable trouble: he was of the type known as Ritualistic, and persuaded a worthy couple who had been married at a Nonconformist chapel that they had not been ecclesiastically married at all, and that it was necessary that they should be married over again at the parish church. This was very much resented by the Nonconformist interest, and the clergyman was put upon his trial at the Oxford assizes. The judge took a very lenient view, and said that as the parties had already been legally married, any farther service was illusory and mere child's-play, and that 'he might just as well have read *Cherry Chase* over them.' In one of his novels, Mr. Charles Reade makes his hero, a clergyman, wonder whether he might not legally marry himself to the heroine, especially as they were both cast upon a desolate

island. It may be as well that novelist and novel-readers should be aware that for a clergyman to officiate at his own marriage is utterly illegal. One day an elderly clergyman met a young one. 'I have had a hard day's work,' said the young Levite. 'I began at seven o'clock this morning by marrying a young couple.' 'Allow me to inform you,' said his senior, 'that a marriage at that time of the day is no marriage at all. Moreover, to the best of my belief, you have made yourself liable to seven years' penal servitude. You had better go back as soon as you can and marry them over again.'

Generally speaking, marriages pass off very smoothly, and frequently with very pretty effects. The brides are credited with a careful study and perusal of the service for many days beforehand. Sometimes there has been a rehearsal. I have known brides, when the grooms have failed to make the proper responses, prompt them immediately and with the greatest facility. The most common mistake of the bride is to take off only one of her gloves, whereas both hands are brought into requisition in the service. As for the men, they commit all kinds of blunders and bunglings. I have known a man, at that very nervous and trying moment, follow a clergyman within the communion-rails, and prepare to take a place opposite him. I have known a man, when a minister stretched out his hand to unite those of the couple, take it vigorously in his own and give it a hearty shake. Sometimes more serious difficulties occur. Some ladies have had an almost unconquerable reluctance to use the word 'obey;' one or two, if their own statements are to be accepted, have ingeniously constructed the word

'nobey.' The word, however, has still to be formally admitted into the language. There was one girl, who was being married by a very kindly old clergyman, who absolutely refused to utter the word 'obey.' The minister suggested that, if she were unwilling to utter the word aloud, she should whisper it to him; but the young lady refused to accept even this kind of compromise. Further, however, than this the clergyman refused to accommodate her; but when he was forced to dismiss them all without proceeding any further, the recalcitrant young person consented to 'obey.'

The difficulty, however, is not always made on the side of the lady. On one occasion the bridegroom wished to deliver a little oration qualifying his vow, and describing in what sense and to what extent he was using the words of the formula. He was, of course, given to understand that nothing of this kind could be permitted. There was one man who accompanied the formula with *sotto voce* remarks, which must have been exceedingly disagreeable to the officiating minister. He interpolated remarks after the fashion of Burchell's 'Fudge!' 'With this ring I thee wed; that's superstition.' 'With my body I thee worship; that's idolatry.' 'With all my worldly goods I thee endow; that's a lie.' It is a wonder that such a being was not conducted out of church by the beadle. This puts one in mind of an anecdote that is told of a man who in his time was a Cabinet Minister. There was a great discussion on the question whether a man can marry on three hundred a year. 'All I can say,' said the great man, 'is that when I said, "With all my worldly goods I thee endow," so far from

having three hundred pounds, I question whether, when all my debts were paid, I had three hundred pence.' 'Yes, my love,' said his wife; 'but then you had your splendid intellect.' 'I didn't endow you with that, ma'am,' sharply retorted the right honourable husband.

In these days the clergy frequently occupy an important place at the wedding-breakfast. Not only are they there in the case of private friendship and acquaintance, but they are also frequently invited in their official capacity. At the present time there is a great demand upon the clergyman to propose the health of the married couple. He is perhaps accredited with a greater command of euphonious language on such an occasion, as he certainly has a much greater experience. 'The bridesmaids' generally falls to the lot of some agreeable young gentleman who is on his promotion, and who is assumed to do it in a rattling and enlivening style. The more solemn and measured language of the principal toast very frequently devolves on the parson. When a parson goes to a wedding-breakfast, he is strongly of opinion that the hour ought not to be earlier than one, and might often be conveniently made later. The breakfast then comes in as the usual lunch or early dinner, without upsetting every one's digestive arrangements for the day. Indeed, knowing men will drive off direct to their clubs from the vestry, and not risk the hidden dangers of a heavy noon-tide meal. The parson may have a tendency to continue the service into the speech. I know the case of a worthy but somewhat low-spirited couple who spent their wedding-day in Kensal Green Cemetery, while their friends kept up a prolonged prayer-meeting.

The parson, however, is like the Laureate; his

'Drooping memory will not shun
The foaming grape of eastern France.'

The lovely poem at the close of *In Memoriam*, in which Lord Tennyson celebrates the marriage of his sister to Edmund Law Lushington, lately Professor of Greek at Glasgow, is the most perfect gem in all the literature of weddings. When the bridegroom has returned thanks, after the parson's speech, in these days of feminine oratory, there is sometimes a tendency on the part of the bride to make a little speech of her own. 'I call you all to witness,' said a bride within our hearing, 'that I have no intention of obeying.' 'Ah, madam,' replied Frederick Denison Maurice, who was present, 'you have yet to learn the blessedness of obedience.'

The signing of the register after the ceremony calls for a few remarks. The bridal party at once adjourn to the vestry, which is a scene of congratulations and caresses. At only too many weddings, 'Bill Stump, his x mark,' especially in the provinces, is a prevailing kind of signature. Under such circumstances a clergyman will generally say a kindly word of counsel, advising the wife to teach her husband, as no young man can expect to get on in these days without reading and writing; or he may perhaps have to advise the husband to teach the wife. It occasionally happens that both the contracting parties are unable to write, but in our age of education this is becoming extremely rare, and such crass ignorance will eventually disappear. The usual number of witnesses is two, but the legal number is not limited. A large number is very common; and I know of a case in which there were thirteen witnesses. It is hardly necessary to

say that there are double registers, one of which is eventually deposited in Somerset House. There are some cases in which a sight of a marriage register is a matter of great curiosity to tourists and visitors. For instance, being at Haworth Church, I looked at the signature of Charlotte Brontë in her marriage register. It is a favourite object of inspection to American travellers. The leaf was almost threatening to disappear, from repeated handlings. There is a whole mine of curiosities to be discovered in old parish registers, and it is a matter of regret that so very few of them go back to pre-Reformation times. The marriage register often figures in the lawsuit and in the pages of British fiction. It is the most valuable and trustworthy evidence of its kind. Unfortunately, there are bad men in all professions, and registers have been tampered with in most iniquitous ways. Some time ago a friend of the writer's offered a reward of five hundred pounds for the discovery of a marriage register of the highest importance in a suit which he had on hand. A wonderful story was sent to him of the discovery of the desired entry in an old register. A great snowstorm had broken through the vestry roof, and nearly spoiled the parish registers; it had become necessary to overhaul them to inspect damages, and the missing entry had been thus almost miraculously discovered. Fortunately, my friend was not a very credulous man, and he went to a great expense with lawyers and experts to test the value of the document before paying the five hundred pounds. It was then discovered that the registry was a skilful forgery on the part of the parson, who found it necessary to fly the country.

If there has been an occasional

mistake through a real parson, there has sometimes been still more serious peril through a false one. To go back to our old friend the Vicar of Wakefield, there may have been times when a false parson and a forged license have been used. Our marriage laws, with all their undoubted imperfections, have disappointed the machinations of the villain squire and his serving-man. Perhaps the nearest approach to this kind of wrong has been perpetrated at the registrar's office. This public office gives even still greater facilities to clandestine marriages than the system of banns. There is really extremely little publicity or public oversight in respect to them. There is an old ill-natured proverb that a sailor has a wife in every port. There really appears to be an element of truth in the saying, for a clergyman in a large seaport town has told me that some cruel cases have come within his knowledge of sailors marrying at registrars' offices, furnishing a room or two, and then sailing away, never to see their brides again. There are a certain number of cases in which swindlers and adventurers have falsely assumed the character of clergymen, and have officiated in church. Every marriage performed under such circumstances is absolutely nugatory and void. It not unfrequently happens that some swell-mobsmen or person of that kind assumes clerical attire for the purposes of larceny or felony. Some years ago a man was convicted of forging letters of orders, having stolen the original orders of the well-known 'Brother Ignatius;' but the conviction was quashed, as the judges held that such a document was not a deed in any legal sense. This did not prevent the man from undergoing a justly-earned

penalty for obtaining goods under false pretences. Cases of a much more serious nature have been known, in which for years together a man has done duty as a clergyman, being nothing of the kind. The following case was related to me by a bishop of the Church of England. There was a man who had officiated as a clergyman in a large town for about fifteen years. At the lapse of that time it was accidentally discovered that he was an impostor. A new bishop came or the man went into a new diocese; anyhow, the request came that he would produce his letters of orders. Letters of orders are rather precious and remarkable documents; if once they are lost they cannot be replaced. The pseudo-clergyman replied, expressing his great regret that, in the course of a removal, the letters had been hopelessly mislaid, but hoped that the length of time during which he had served in the diocese would be considered a sufficient voucher. The bishop wrote back to say that he regretted the loss of the letters of orders, and that it would be quite sufficient if he gave exact dates, which would enable him to refer to the diocesan registry. The imposture then became known. It was a matter of great anxiety to settle what had best be done under such circumstances. Of course a very large number of marriages had been performed during these fifteen years, not one of which was legal. The first suggestion was that an Act should be passed making these marriages legal. There were objections to this course. It was considered that an immense deal of pain would be caused by the publication of the invalidity of these marriages, and that peculiar hardship would be done in the case of children,

where one or both of the parents had died in the mean time. On a certain evening there was a solemn discussion between the bishop of the diocese and the Home Secretary, the result of which was a communication to the villanous false clergyman that, if he left England immediately and for ever, proceedings would not be taken, but that otherwise he would be prosecuted.

Marriage, then, should be celebrated with every circumstance of publicity and rejoicing. This, at least, is the popular instinct, and it appears to me to be correct. The growing heresy of private marriages, unless under very exceptional circumstances, ought to be repressed. In the fourth book

of the *Ethics* Aristotle lays it down that such a matter as a marriage, which only happens once in a way in human life, ought to be celebrated magnificently. The wise old heathen was right in this as in so many things. There are many who will record a still higher example of that marriage miracle—the first of miracles—when, in spite of the Essenes, who corresponded to the Good Templars and Blue Ribbons, much wine was evidently consumed. We have brought together a certain number of wedding incidents; but in many a parson's cosy study throughout the country some additions might be made from floating traditions and manifold experiences.

AN EASTERN PARADISE ;

Or, A Summer Walk through Kashmir.

WE were drawing near the close of a six months' sojourn in Kashmir, when one bright day in September found us encamped on the shores of the Manasbal Lake. We had become by this time well accustomed to the open-air gipsy life, and were in thorough good training, so resolved to leave our ponies and syces behind, and trust entirely to our walking powers to carry us through the Lolab Valley. How refreshing to body and mind a tour in Kashmir is none can realise who have not spent a year among the heat and petty gossip of an Indian station. We had lingered at Gulmarg (Flower Meadow), and at its more beautiful rival Sonamarg (Golden Meadow), mountain meadows covered with English and Alpine wild flowers, and had delighted in strange picturesque Sirinagur. Many days full of pleasure had we spent gliding over its lovely lake, or along its Jhelam highway and Venetian-like canals, picturing to ourselves the olden time of the Mogul emperors as we stood on the Isle of Chenars, or spent the hot noonday among the fountains of Shalimar and cool groves of the Garden of Bliss. Pleasant also were our visits to the shawl merchants' quaint many-storied houses, ornamented with trellis-work and vines, each having its separate ghât or landing-steps. We were ushered upstairs to the principal rooms, and while magnificent shawls were spread out for our inspection by white-robed boys, tiny china cups of delicious lemon-coloured tea were handed to us. Needless to

add, when we left the valley several of these shawls were among our spoils.

And now Manasbal is before us; on our left the fine cataract formed by the Amrawattee stream falling over the steep limestone cliffs into the lake below, and some distance off, on our right, the ruins of the Badshah Bagh, one of the many gardens built by the Emperor Jehaughir for Nurmahal. The first part of our journey is by water across the lake into a canal leading to the Jhelam, and so connecting Manasbal with the Wular Lake, the largest in Kashmir. We have two boats, one for ourselves, the other for our servants. These boats are about fifty-six feet long by six broad, and are covered with an awning of matting supported on a light wooden roof, to the sides of which separate pieces are attached to be let down at night. Our crew consisted of Golaba, a handsome young Kashmiri, his wife, three brothers—the youngest, Subhana, an incorrigible *gamin*—mother-in-law, and two small children. It was amusing to see the whole of this family towing us up the Jhelam, a mite of a girl of four heading the procession, and strong Golaba pulling in the rear, with his eye on his mother-in-law to see there was no shirking! We started from Manasbal on a clear sunny afternoon. Our morning had been spent in talking to an old fakir who has lived here since the early part of the century, and is hewing his grave out of the rocky hill. We explored to the end, about sixty feet, and then he

took us into his orchard, full of the most delicious peaches, and gave us a large supply. He bestows great care on them, and both in size and flavour they are equal to the finest hothouse ones we have ever tasted. In our English home we often think of the old man on the shores of the beautiful lake, and wonder if his life's task is accomplished and he laid to rest in his rocky cave. We were enjoying the peaches as we glided out of the lake into the canal, and watching the strong graceful figure of Mrs. Golaba as she wielded her heart-shaped paddle. Her hair struck us with great astonishment when we first beheld her, as we fancied it must reach down to her feet; but we soon discovered she followed the fashion of all her countrywomen, and wove strands of black silky worsted into its numberless plaits; she always wore a small red cap, and a white chadar or veil thrown carelessly over her head. We passed under a curious old stone bridge, a single arch, about one hundred yards before entering the Jhelam. The light was fast fading when we were moored to the left bank of the river near the village of Hajan, and our servants' boat came alongside to give us our dinner.

At ten o'clock began our preparations for the night, which consisted in shutting up our camp table and chairs, and opening out our beds; then round each bed, as well as on the carved wood-work at the sides of the boat, we carefully placed ridges and mounds of insect-powder, a precaution only too necessary, as Golaba and his family occupy the boat summer and winter, and cleanliness is not a Kashmiri virtue. We could have wished that something more substantial than a mat separated us from this happy family, espe-

cially when the children would chatter at unearthly hours; but fortunately the open-air life makes us sleep well, and we were only disturbed once in the night by an animal from the shore leaping on our boat; the noise made by every one speedily frightened it back again, and whether it was dog, monkey, or jackal will never be known.

We got under way at day-break, and reached the Wular Lake about nine o'clock. It is a magnificent piece of water, twelve miles long and ten wide, but, like all mountain lakes, subject to sudden or severe squalls, and there have been many cases in which these unwieldy, top-heavy boats have capsized. Golaba told us that his father remembers no fewer than 300 filled with Golab Singh's attendants being lost. We were rowed across at a great pace, and once safely over, Golaba and his brothers busied themselves gathering the singhara, or water-nut, which grows abundantly in the shallow parts, and ground into flour forms one of the chief articles of food of the people. We amused ourselves filling what we call our 'cabin' with beautiful lotus-flowers. We were moored this evening near the little village of Alsoo, and the mosquitoes being troublesome, Master Subhana was told off to keep charcoal burning in the 'kangris,' small earthen pots enclosed in basket-work, which all Kashmiris carry for the sake of warmth; the smoke partly banished our pests, but they came back in hundreds when we tried to sleep.

At four A.M. we mustered our forces, and saw the ten feet square Swiss cottage tent, which has been our home for so many weeks, carefully tied up in two bundles and given to coolies to carry, and everything ready for the start.

Golaba came with us as guide, and we had also Shir Ali, a Mari hill-man, like his namesake possessed of a determined character, and Eerchappa and Buddee, two Madrassees, who had accompanied us from the plains—the former as tent-pitcher and cook, the latter as attendant. Both were very black and ugly, but first-rate servants, untiring on the longest marches. Golaba bade an affectionate farewell to his family, who will take the boat to Sopur to meet us, and off we started, the fresh crisp morning air making us feel as if fifty miles' walk would be nothing in such a climate. For about a mile after leaving Alsoo our path ran along an open space among masses of forget-me-nots of every tinge, from the palest blue to the deepest purple, and then began a steady steep ascent up the grassy mountain-side. We plodded on for two or three miles, and then turned round, and gazed again and again upon the most glorious view we have ever beheld. The sun had risen while we were ascending the mountain, and shone upon the silvery Wular, which stretched out like an inland sea. The Lanka Island, covered with mulberry-trees and vines, formed a soft green spot in the centre; and far away in the distance were the dark pine forests sloping down to the water's edge, while beyond them were the snow-capped mountains glistening in the sun, which gave a crimson glow to the sacred peak of Haramuk. It is impossible to describe the sight, but it forms a memory picture which will never fade away. The only others we can recall that bear the least comparison with it are the Scarsford, seen in the clear light of an Arctic midsummer night, with opal colours on the glacier which comes down into the sea,

and a strange wonderful sunset as we stood in the Kremlin at Moscow.

We were glad to reach the summit of our mountain, and the shade of the pines was very grateful after our long steep climb. The ground was covered with potentilla, gentians, cranesbill, and many other bright flowers, and Shir Ali made me a nosegay of them, discoursing all the time of the difficulties of the Pir Panjal route, by which we intend to leave the country. He is naturally anxious we should return by Mari and land him at his home, so we pay little attention when he tells us the pass is as steep as the side of a house. Our descent to-day was very long and steep; but the pine-trees extend on this side down to the valley, so we did not find the heat oppressive, and we could feast our eyes on the beautiful Lolab lying far below us. We entered it through a grove of walnuts, and then an easy walk of about three miles brought us to the village of Lalpur. We rested under the walnut and apple trees while Eerchappa and Shir Ali pitched our tent close by, beside a clear running stream. It was marvellous to see how quickly this was accomplished; and then the indefatigable Eerchappa proceeded to collect some stones for a fireplace, and was soon busily engaged preparing our dinner. Subhana was discovered this morning sucking some eggs which had been procured with difficulty, and were destined, under the magic hands of Eerchappa, to become an omelette; but we consoled ourselves with the reflection that apples—and such apples!—were to be had by simply shaking the trees above us, and what could be better than a good apple pie? We have not tasted bread

for five months; but the chapattees—unleavened cakes made of flour and water—when baked crisp, form an excellent substitute. Our dinner over, we sat in the doorway of our tent watching the cooking-pots being washed and put up ready for the morning's march. And then our four faithful followers sit in a circle with their blankets wrapped round them, and enjoy the well-earned repose of the hubble-bubble, Golaba's kangri full of charcoal, for the nights are chilly.

No words can describe the beauty of the next morning when we rose at half-past four and looked out of the tent: the dew was glittering like hoar-frost on the grass, and the distant mountains stood out so dark against the sky. Buddee brought us tea and chapattees just as we had finished rolling up our bedding, and at 5.20 we started, walking through pretty park-like scenery, the undulating shades being dotted over with mulberry, walnut, apple, and chenar trees, and then through fields of ripened grain. A short descent brought us to a lovely bit of woodland, full of plum-trees covered with the most tempting red and yellow plums; it was like the enchanted wood full of luscious fruit one reads of in a fairy story, and we each broke off a branch literally covered with plums, and ate them as we walked along, finding them delicious. A little further on we plucked some peaches and grapes equally good, and, soon after, cherries and apricots. If, as the Moslems say, the Valley of Kashmir was the Garden of Eden, truly the Lolab must have been its orchard full of the richest and ripest fruit. Golaba tells us these plums form a great temptation to the bears, who come down in large numbers from the surrounding

mountains to feast upon them. We got the skin of a splendid fellow, who was killed on this very spot, from a native shikari at Sopur. We crossed the river Shak twice, and then walked on through cornfields, hawthorn thickets, and by hundreds of apple, peach, and plum trees, till we ceased to stop and pluck their golden and rosy fruit.

Just as we came to a green open spot we were met by a fine soldier-like old man, who rushed up to us with the greatest delight, and said it gave his heart joy to see English faces again. He is a Pathan, called Ghoolam Russool, who had been with Sir William Macnaghten as police-constable during the whole time he was in Afghanistan, and has now retired on the pension given him by the British Government, to a farm in the valley. He was most anxious we should come to his house, and he would have sheep and fowls cooked and sweetmeats made up for our food; but this we unfortunately could not do, as all our baggage had gone on, so we sat down on the grassy slope, while he sent to his farm for some new milk. It was delightful to see the genuine pleasure it gave him to talk to us, as it was years since he had seen an English face, and hearing from the coolies who preceded us that we were coming along this path, which seems unfrequented, had run out to meet and welcome us. He told us he was guarding Lady Macnaghten's tent at the time of the murder of Sir William, and showed us with pride a pistol she had given him, with an inscription engraved on a silver plate let into the stock recording his faithful service. He also related how he had accompanied General Pollock's avenging force, and exhibited his feet with several toes gone from frost-bite

in the bitter cold of the Bolan Pass. The new milk was not very long coming, and was most refreshing; and after we had told our old friend all the news we could think of regarding events in India, including the visit (in 1876) of the Prince of Wales, 'the Shahzadah,' in which he was greatly interested, we started again on our way, Ghoolam Russool accompanying us for some distance, and seeming very loth to say good-bye.

We shook him warmly by the hand, and then plunged into a tangled wood of wild roses and hawthorn, the flowers over now, but the masses of red berries showing how beautiful they must have been. The air was scented with sweetbriar, and here and there were patches of feathery traveller's joy. Soon after nine o'clock we reached the village of Koombryal, where we halted by a stream for breakfast: our servants had gone on while we were having our talk with the old Pathan, so it was ready by the time we came up, and we did not linger long over our meal. The valley became very narrow about a mile further on, and the pine-covered hills on our left looked very dark in the bright sunshine. Another mile or so, and the valley widened out again, and brought us to the village of Kofwara, where we are encamped in an orchard full of the rosiest apples we have ever seen. They dropped on our table from the branches above as we sat at dinner this evening. We talked of Ghoolam Russool living in his lonely home in this fair valley, and wondered how long it would be before more English travellers passed by, and brought him news of the world outside the Himalayas.

Shir Ali told us he could not get the people here to sell him

any milk, so he boldly marched into the fields and milked the cows until he had got as much as he wanted; whereupon the owners came from the wood, where they had taken refuge, and demanded the money, which he at once gave them. We informed him such high-handed conduct was very wrong; but no doubt he thinks it was most meritorious, and I am bound to say the people seem to consider it rather a good joke. We cannot understand what they say, as they speak Kashmiri only, of which Vigne states that out of 100 words, 40 will be Persian, 25 Sanskrit, 15 Hindustani, 10 Arabic, and the remainder Tibetan or of the adjacent countries. Shir Ali and Golaba are our interpreters, and speak to us in Hindustani, as do also most of the merchants in Sirinagur. We needed all our extra rugs to-night, as the air was very keen and cold. Our little tent is so cosy that we shall be very sorry when the time comes to leave it, and on returning to a house shall have the same uncomfortable feeling we have experienced after becoming accustomed to the snug cabin of a yacht, where everything is within reach without having to walk from bed to dressing-table or wardrobe; the mere name of such a luxury as a 'dressing-table' sounds strange to us. We do possess, however, a small cracked looking-glass, which, when we think of it, we hang on the tent-pole. How happy our Aryan forefathers must have been when they led this wandering life, perhaps roaming through these sunny valleys, long before they swept like a wave over the far north!

We marched at 6.30 next morning, and a short distance below the village crossed the Kanair river by a very rickety

wooden bridge. Golaba and Shir Ali preferred wading through the water to trusting themselves on it; and we were glad to get safely across, as I had a vivid recollection of trying to cross a mountain stream in Norway by a bridge of snow, and suddenly finding myself subsiding into the cold water beneath. At Sonamarg the other day we walked over a natural snow bridge which never melts, and upon which half a dozen people could stand in perfect safety. We walked for some miles through undulating country, with a wealth of fruit-trees, till we came to an open grassy plain near the village of Grugamoola, where the view was very striking of sloping pine-covered hills, and the magnificent snowy range in the distance. At this village a boy and girl ran away screaming with fright the moment they beheld our ferocious countenances! We then passed by fields full of a plant with red stalks and white flowers, called by the natives *tumba*; and two and a half hours more brought us to Awatkoola, a small, half-deserted village on the bank of the Pohra river. The apple-trees here have their branches bowed down to the ground with fruit, and pears and apricots are equally abundant. We halted near the river for breakfast, and gathered branches of jasmine, the small-flowered variety that grows in English gardens, and is far sweeter than the more heavy-scented one so common in the plains of India.

Two hours' walk from Awatkoola, the greater part of the way by a path beside the river, bordered with meadow-sweet and honeysuckle, and Sogla, our halting-place, came in sight. We pitched our tent among apple-trees, as at Kofwara, and Shir Ali brought us some cobs of maize he had plucked as we came

along, and which were very good fried over the wood fire, and eaten with a little butter and salt. The smell of a wood fire, especially if it be made of pine logs, always makes us long for 'the days when we went gipsying.' We have come to the conclusion that in this month of September the sole occupation of the Lolab people consists in shaking the fruit-trees, and then lazily eating the ripe fruit; the small children sit on the ground, and hold up their chubby brown hands to catch the red apples or golden apricots as they fall. They are pretty children, and many of them quite fair, with gray and even blue eyes.

On a rather cloudy morning we left Sogla, and began the walk which will bring us out of this beautiful fruit-laden valley. Gladly would we have lingered in it; but, alas! our six months' leave will soon expire, and we must return to hard work in the dusty plains, where, instead of early marches in the cool morning, will come the bugle-call to parade. To-day's walk led up by a very pretty little village called Wahia, with a most tempting orchard for encamping in. What we call orchards are groves of fruit-trees growing wild, and in no way enclosed; but the word describes them as they appear to English eyes. The rest of our walk was across open fields dotted over with chenars, and we were delighted to find near a brook a bunch of mistletoe growing on a willow. We had walked nearly eighteen miles when the town of Sopur came in sight, with its quaint bridge across the Jhelam, built half of wood and half of stone. Golaba made out the boats from a long distance, and we soon saw that all the family were coming to meet us. Mrs. Golaba looked

very handsome, stepping along with the freedom and lightness of a Kashmiri woman, and carrying her head in the stately erect way one scarcely ever sees out of the East. Subhana brought me a lovely bunch of crimson water-lilies, which were evidently intended to condone the offence of egg-sucking; and the small girl ran forward with great delight, her tiny paddle in her hand, with which she is being early initiated into the art of rowing.

We at once got into our boats, and were towed up the river to Ningal, where we encamped for the night on the left bank, and the next day went to Sumbal, where we found our ponies looking all the better for their rest. There is great feasting going on among our people, as their Ramadan, or days of abstinence, begin to-morrow, and we have presented them with a fine sheep, for which we paid the modest sum of three shillings! Subhana informed us rather dolefully to-night, as he kept the kangris smoking to ward off mosquitoes, that to-morrow, and for many days after, he would have no food till sunset. We asked him if he did not get very hungry, and he answered simply, 'We sleep a great deal.' Very little sleep did we get for the beating of the drums announcing the end of the Mahometan carnival. Shir Ali and Buddee have been buying supplies for our march, and have got two very fine geese, which, with sauce made from Lolab apples, formed our Michaelmas dinner a week later at Barangalla, below the Pir Panjal Pass: the poor geese were rather thinner by then, as the marching did not seem to suit them. We were kept to our tent

the day after we reached Sumbal by pouring rain, and it was extremely cold. Golaba said at once, 'This is the first winter snow;' and so it proved to be; for next morning, when we rose, the sight that met our eyes was dazzling. The whole of the Sind Valley, down which we had marched a short time since, was white and glistening, and even the lower hills were covered with snow. The cold was intense, and our crew were huddled together in the boat, each with his kangri on his knees, and his blanket falling from his shoulders over it to keep the heat from escaping. They hug their kangris so closely to their bodies in winter that burns are of frequent occurrence. We enjoyed our walk through the Lolab so much that we afterwards walked the whole way from Sirinagur to Bhimber—a distance of 145 miles over the Pir Panjal Pass, 11,500 feet—without the least fatigue, though we were obliged to make several double marches.

In the poplar avenue at Sirinagur we said good-bye to our faithful Golaba and his handsome wife, and Subhana the mischievous, who had come so far on our way with us, promising them that, if we were able, we would return next summer. But before another summer came we had left India for ever, not without a sigh at the thought that, though fresh English men and women will year by year visit the fair Valley of Kashmir, never again will our feet tread its flowery mountain meadows and fruit-laden valleys, or our eyes rest with delighted wonder on its chain of giant sentries, whose armour is eternal snow.

M. C.

THE BEGGARS' CLUB.

THERE are clubs and clubs—aristocratic clubs and democratic clubs, histrionic clubs and benefit clubs, clubs of the great and clubs of the little, clubs which include people of all nationalities, opinions, and hobbies, and clubs which are more exclusive. We have the Hat Club, to which members only were eligible who were distinguished by some remarkably eccentric hat; and we have the Gun Club, immortalised by Jules Verne in *From the Earth to the Moon*, in which every member must have lost either a leg, an arm, an eye, or a nose. But one of the most ancient clubs of all is the Beggars' Club, which, according to an eminent antiquarian, met as early as 1638, at the Three Crowns in the Vintry. The fraternity also assembled at four other places, viz. four barns within a mile of London. These were named 'Draw the Pudding out of the Fire,' 'St. Quinton's,' 'St. Tyb's,' and 'Knapsbury.' A regular dialect was used, called Pedlar's French or St. Giles's Greek; and there were such a number of burlesque phrases, quaint allusions, and nicknames, that they were embodied in several bulky volumes, such as *Hell upon Earth*, or *the History of Whittington's College*, *The Scoundrel's Dictionary*, *Harman's Catechism for Common Cursitors*, and *Grosse's Classical Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue*, published in 1788.

The Beggars' Club in the year 1790 used to meet at the Welsh's Head, Dyot Street, St. Giles's, and also at Kent Street. There were

no stated times for these meetings; they took place according to circumstances. In a very interesting paper in *Walker's Hibernian Magazine* there is an account of a visit paid to this club in September 1790, describing the grotesque figures which were seen there, the rules for admitting members, and a curious handbill is also given which was presented to the gentleman on the occasion of his visit. It runs as follows:

'The company of all mumpers, cadgers, matchmakers, watercress-fishers, dandelion-diggers, dragon-fogrum-gatherers, &c., is earnestly requested to-morrow at the Old Blind Beak's Head, in Dyot Street, St. Giles's, at nine o'clock in the evening precisely. Daddy Sculk in the chair. Mr. Nickfroth informs his friends and customers that the hours of meeting are unavoidably made later, on account of the many evening lectures and night sermons at this time of year, as Methodist meetings, &c. The company, as the house has been altered, will be accommodated with a large room up-stairs; but *those who are not really lame are desired to leave their sticks and crutches at the bar, to prevent mischief*. As Mr. N. is not licensed to sell tobacco, boys are provided to fetch the same. Sheep's heads, hogs' maws, &c., for the company. Mr. N. intends to give his customers the privilege of broiling sprats on the tap-room fire all the winter.

'N.B.—It being the design of the company to mix business with recreation, after the admission of

new members Daddy Sculk will give directions for the avoiding of beadles, runners, and other unlucky persons; point out the best parts of the country for tramping, making artificial sores, &c.

'P.S.—Mr. N. will send strong beer in white jugs or black tin pots to any of the stands at a reasonable distance from his house, at any time of the day.'

For a stranger to be admitted into the club-room of these choice spirits, he had to be recommended by a friend as being no knarler, i.e. a teller of tales, but a good fellow, or one who wishes to see life. The visitor on the occasion mentioned had not long paid his fourpence for porter before the gaiety reached its height, songs, jeers, and jokes at the hardness of the times filling up every pause till supper was called for. As there were some new members to be admitted, the table was soon cleared; after which the upright man, viz. the principal of a company, presented a candidate to the president, and the latter, taking a pot of strong beer, poured it on the head of the new-comer, pronouncing as he did so the following words:

'I, A. B., do make thee, C. B.; and from henceforth it shall be lawful for thee to cant or gag for thy living in all places.'

The new member then took the oath, always administered on such occasions:

'I, C. B., do promise and swear to be a true brother, and that I will in all things obey the laws of this society. I will not teach any one to cant, gammon, or gag, or disclose any of our secrets to any stranger. I will likewise take the upright man's part against all that shall oppose him or any of us; and I will not suffer him to

be abused or molested by any runners, beadles, or strange Abrams, rufflers, hookers, palliards, Irish toyls, swig-men, priggers, whip-jacks, jarkmen, dommerers, clapper dudgeons, &c., but will defend him or them, as far as in my power lieth, against all others whatsoever. Lastly, I will not conceal what I win of libkins, ruffmans, or any greenhorn, but preserve it for the company I belong to. And I will *bona fide* cleave to my dell, rum mort coe, or doxie, and will bring her duds, margery praters, goblers, grunting cheats, or tibs of the buttery, neddy, panum, or anything else I come at, as winnings for her wapping. So help me Bob.'

This ceremony was succeeded by a lecture from the president, after which came the following song, from one of the leading members:

'Tho' beggars so free
We called may be,
The king is a beggar we plainly may see:
He begs every year of the Commons and
Peers;
And the soldier oft begs to be paid his
arrears!

The Commons, also,
To the people do go,
To beg their assistance to choose them,
we know;
And places and pensions, of honours the
spring,
By courtiers and peers are all begged of
the king!

Of the parson we crave
That our souls he would save;
He begs of the farmers his tithes he
might have;
But for all such professions we have no
vain cares,
Though we have no religion, we live by
our prayers!

The stewards of the club had the right to call upon every member to show his way of begging, so that by comparing the different shams, all interference with each other's systems might be avoided. The oldest 'mumpcr' was allowed the preference, and each took his turn according to seniority, and exhibited his peculiar mode of

exciting charity. The first, with a long beard down to his girdle, stepped forward, and began as follows:

'Good your worship, cast an eye of pity upon a poor decayed tradesman, who has been the husband of three wives, the father of thirty children, the master of eighteen apprentices, and has kept six journeymen at work for many years together; till at last, undone by long sickness and severe creditors, was kept a prisoner at Ludgate for sixteen years, and now, in the winter of my age, forced to beg my bread through downright poverty and incurable lameness.'

Then followed a second, whose legs were covered with artificial ulcers, a dirty handkerchief bound round his head, and his face coloured with turmeric. His story was, 'Good Christian people, show your tender-hearted charity to a disabled wretch who has been troubled these twenty years with the running evil. Pray look upon my deplorable condition: I have been touched by two kings; have been in all the hospitals about London, but turned out as incurable; have been brought to beggary and want by ill surgeons and unkind relations; and am now in a starving condition, unless the Lord opens the hearts of some good charitable Christians to relieve a poor distressed creature under a load of miseries.'

Then a third, dressed up like a 'decayed shopkeeper,' with his right arm bound up in an old silk sling, thus set forth his hypocritical complaint in a soft wheedling voice: 'Pray, worthy sir, compassionate the sufferings of a poor decayed citizen, who after many crosses in his family, and losses by trade, had his house burnt down by the carelessness of a servant, and the use of his right

arm taken from him by the dead palsy, and is now forced to ask the charity of well-disposed persons, not only on behalf of my poor self, but a distressed wife that has lain sick and bedridden above these two years.'

A fourth, with a wooden leg and but one eye, having lost the one by wrestling and the other by boxing, with a thrum-cap upon his head, a pair of mittens upon his hands, and a seaman's handkerchief about his neck, made a blunt oration as follows: 'God bless you, noble captain; remember a poor seaman, who has lost a leg in the service and an eye in the battle. Was I able to fight, I'd scorn to beg. I have been a whole man in my time; therefore, pray, captain, bestow your charity upon what the French have left of me.'

Next came a fifth, who showed his qualification in the art of begging by screwing up his limbs, dislocating his joints, and crumpling up his whole body as if he had been broken on the wheel. He assumed a sorrowful look like a playhouse ghost, and broke out in the words: 'O, pity a poor labourer, who, by falling off a scaffold from the top of Paul's, had my bones broken, my skull cracked, my limbs crippled, and in one moment's time was made this miserable spectacle, who is now forced to crawl upon his crutches to beg your charity.'

After him came a clean old fellow, with a copper countenance, silver hairs, a broad-brimmed hat, a clean band, but a coat patched with as many different colours as are to be seen in a herald's mantle. He started up, uncovered his gray head, made a humble bow, and began the following story: 'Pray, sir, vouchsafe to look upon a poor decayed gentleman, who was once blest with a good estate, kept a hospitable home, and had many

servants; but by my over-kindness to an ill wife, my friendship to poor relations, and being bound to ungrateful friends, have unhappily brought me to want and misery in the winter of my age.'

Next to this lying hypocrite up started a ragged old fellow, whose beard was like an old stable broom, and, rolling about his eyes without saying a word, dropped down at the end of the table, clenched his hands fast, foamed at the mouth like a Siberian prophet in a fit of ecstasy, and, beating his head against the floor, most skilfully assumed a fit of epilepsy. At length recovering, he got up, set his back against

the wall, and then took his seat again at the table among the other members of the society.

Such, very much condensed, is the account by an eye-witness of a meeting of the Beggars' Club in 1790, and it certainly gives a curious peep of the elaborate tricks which were played on the public when there were no Charity Organisation Societies to keep impostors in check. The beggars lived, no doubt, a jovial merry life, caring little for the morrow. But beggary and crime are very nearly allied, and the probability is that some of these clever beggars carried their tricks too far, and ended their days at Tyburn.

C. J. HAMILTON.

IN HOLIDAY HUMOUR.

BY THE AUTHOR OF 'THE DIARY OF A PLAIN GIRL.'

'Come, woo me, woo me; for I am in holiday humour, and like enough to consent.'
—As You Like It.

'Is my hat straight, Marian?'

'I should tilt it rather more forward if I were you. That hat's a little too strong-minded for my taste, Olivia.'

'And the bow of my sash, is that straight too?'

'You have grown very particular all of a sudden;' and Marian, pausing in the midst of her own toilette, fastened a direct, rather meaning gaze on her sister's face. Olivia's gray eyes encountered the gaze steadily, almost defiantly, but a faint blush sprang to her pale cheek.

'I don't know what you mean, Marian,' she said.

'O, I wasn't meaning anything at all! But you look very nice this morning, Livy. I wonder if Mr. Sydney Tresidder likes cream-coloured gowns and terracotta Liberty sashes?'

Olivia laughed in spite of herself, bending a rather flushed face over her many-buttoned glove. 'Marian,' she said, 'you will never be ready at this rate. The steamer is almost due, and—'

'And a certain young man in tweed knickerbockers and a straw hat has been walking up and down the Pension garden for the last half-hour. Say I not sooth?' cried Marian, deliberately adjusting each chestnut curl on her white forehead.

'You are very silly,' said Olivia, but again she blushed and smiled as she spoke.

'Mr. Sydney Tresidder would be a trifle flattered if he knew what roses the mere mention of

his name could call into bloom,' answered Marian, still intent on the curls. 'Frailty, thy name is Livy! "But three months dead!" Olivia, how about the industrious young man in Paper Buildings who cannot afford to take holidays in Switzerland?'

For a moment there was silence. Olivia walked across the sunny little room and stood by the open window. 'The—the person in Paper Buildings has given up caring—if he ever cared,' she said, and there was an odd sound in her voice, 'and so have I.'

She leaned on the window-ledge when she had spoken, growing very intent on the prospect outside. And, indeed, it was fair enough. Before her lay the lake, that fairest Lake of the Four Cantons, wide, blue, sparkling in the morning sunlight; the wooded slopes and snow-crowned peaks rose on all sides; directly opposite, Pilatus reared his hoary head; and beyond, in the dim distance, towered the Yungfrau from among a virgin company of sister peaks.

'It's going to be awfully hot,' said Marian very volubly, as she tied on her hat. 'I wish we'd gone somewhere up the mountains like sensible people. No persons in their senses would think of establishing themselves on the shore of the lake in such weather. And an expedition into Lucerne! the hottest place in the world except this.'

'How many of us are going?' asked Olivia, turning round again,

and showing a rather grave face.

'O, there will be the Treasidders, of course—Nelly and Fanny and your Mr. Sydney,' Marian answered—'and Mr. Collett (that makes four), and Tom Leigh and Miss Meldrum. She is the chaperon, mamma says, but we are not to let her know it.'

'Poor Miss Meldrum!' said Olivia softly.

The Pension Sonnenthal was assembled in a body on the shore of the lake as the two girls came down the wooden steps: Olivia tall and grave in her cool dress, with the sash from Messrs. Liberty's and the hat that was 'a little strong-minded;' Marian, bright-eyed, light-footed, faultlessly got up as was her wont.

'We thought you were never coming, Miss Longcroft,' cried a blue-eyed young man in flannels, stepping out from the little group of people towards which the girls were making their way. And then followed much handshaking and laughter, and congratulatory remarks on the weather. Tom Leigh of the blue eyes and flannels flitted about among the ladies with knots of *Alpenveilchen* and *Alpenrosen*. Miss Meldrum, in a highly starched gown and shady hat, smiled upon the little company, to which, all unwitting, she was to play propriety. Miss Meldrum's smiles were by no means perennial; sometimes, indeed, she was a little moody, a little sour perhaps, as virginity at forty is apt, alas! to be: but to-day she smiled. A tall young man, brown-eyed, brown-skinned, wearing tweed knickerbockers and a straw hat, stood by Olivia Longcroft's side with an air of supreme contentment on his good-looking face. And I may here take occasion to remark, that not only on the lawn of the Pension Son-

nenthal, but on the steamer, when they had taken their places later on, the brown tweed suit and straw hat contrived somehow or other to maintain a close proximity to the cream-coloured gown and terra-cotta sash.

'Here we go!' cried Tom Leigh, as the steamer made off from the landing-place.

The young people were in high spirits; they scampered from one end of the boat to the other; they bought fruit of the dull-eyed peasants; they made a great many jokes about nothing at all. Caroline Meldrum, establishing herself as though by instinct in one of the corner seats (poor Caroline, whose life was all corners and third places!), looked on rather glumly at the antics of her companions. The sun danced and sparkled on the water; the mountains stood out very white and green against the bright blue sky; a couple of Italians were playing violins, trilling out pretty shapeless songs in their bird-like voices as they played. Olivia Longcroft lay back in the chair which Sydney Treasidder had brought her, and smiled up at him with a face from which all traces of its early gravity had completely vanished.

'Isn't it lovely!' she said.

'Yes, I think so; perhaps it's all rather too much like a lithograph, but I'm not very critical to-day, somehow,' and the brown tweed suit slowly stretched itself alongside the canvas chair, so that the straw hat was about on a level with the knee of the cream-coloured gown.

'It spoils everything to criticise it, I think,' said Olivia, looking down at the brown eyes lifted towards her.

'This from a modern young lady who has been to Girton! The Millennium approaches! Miss Longcroft, we will not criticise.

We will forget for to-day that we are the pampered children of an effete civilisation. We will play that Mr. Ruskin is a myth and Mr. Pater a nightmare.'

'And we will admire everything, even to that good lady's apparel,' answered Olivia, glancing from the brown eyes to a sturdy peasant-woman hard by, and thence to the eyes again.

Tresidder looked across at the woman and laughed aloud. She wore a short wide skirt of excruciating plaid, and a velvet bodice adorned with coloured beads; a huge umbrella and flapping hat with rose-coloured streamers completed this tasteful costume.

The boat puffed and paddled its way along the windings of the lake, till by and by the houses of Lucerne—Lucerne the city of the lamps, Lucerne the home of perpetual holiday—could be discerned gleaming white against the pine-clad hills. And very soon our merry band of pleasure-seekers had exchanged the sunny deck of the steamer for the no less sunny streets of the festive little town. They wandered up and down the parade; they stood to watch the people arriving at the Schweizerhof; they lingered on the old bridges and inspected the gay little shops. Tresidder (whose unobtrusive maintenance of a desired proximity was a marvel of skill) expended a small fortune on the purchase of wooden bears and Thorvaldsen lions. The young man was in the wildest spirits; his sisters regarded him with some alarm and protested against his extravagance. Miss Meldrum's smiles had subsided by now; she was hot, cross, and tired, and wanted her luncheon. She wondered what was the fun of it all that the young people should be so mightily pleased. It seemed dull and stupid enough.

They lunched in a shady garden affording a distant glimpse of the lake; there were coffee and omelettes, honey and ices, and great piles of scarlet mountain-strawberries. Tresidder sat opposite Olivia, smiling aimlessly throughout the meal. I am aware that in books, when two young people are interested in one another, they are given to exchange glances long and intense, or swift and fraught with tragic meaning. A more commonplace experience has taught me that a recurrent and meaningless smile, far off indeed from the immortal smile of Tito and Romoia, is, under the circumstances, a far more frequent phenomenon. It is a sad thing to have to record of one's hero, but I must confess that Sydney Tresidder persistently grinned from beginning to end of that luncheon. He grinned vaguely when he handed Miss Longcroft her portion of omelette; he smiled fatuously when he asked her for the salt. Over Olivia's face, too, the ripples and sparkles played ceaselessly. For these silly smiles are so remarkably catching, even when you are twenty-two and have been to Girtan.

'Is there some joke between you two?' cried Miss Meldrum sharply.

(Poor Caroline, into the muddy depths of whose small eyes nobody had ever cared to gaze!) The two young people were covered hopelessly with confusion.

Tresidder rose with scarlet face, and pushed back his chair. 'Has everybody finished luncheon?' he said, taking out his watch; 'because it's time we set off to do the lions.'

'The Lion, I suppose you mean,' cried Leigh, also rising; 'and there's the cathedral, and a garden which has some mysterious connection with the glacial period.'

Miss Meldrum excused herself rather stiffly, on the plea of fatigue. She would go and sit under the trees on the parade, and they would meet her at the landing-stage at five o'clock.

Tresidder and Olivia made no excuse, but they drifted away from the sightseers, somehow or other, and found themselves strolling together down the shady parade.

'Thorwaldsen and the glacial period, Miss Longcroft! "Dost thou like the picture?" I mean, do they not sound as music in your ears?' There was a half-satirical tone in Tresidder's voice as he spoke.

'They—they are very interesting.' Olivia wondered why her voice faltered as she brought out the stupid little sentence.

'I repeat, Thorwaldsen and the glacial period. And I am going to cut you off from them, Miss Longcroft, to hold you back from them for to-day, perhaps for all the ages; for who knows when you may revisit Lucerne? We agreed not to be critical, did we not? I want you to enjoy the sunshine with me, and think about nothing at all. You are like Cassius, I believe—you think too much.'

They had made their way down to the low wide wall of gray stone which skirts the parade, and stood a moment gazing down into the lucid depths below.

Miss Meldrum, from her bench under the trees, watched them with a sort of dull vexation as they leisurely took their seats on the wall, Olivia propping herself luxuriously against a square post; Tresidder taking up his position opposite, and leaning forward as though to catch every word or smile she might be pleased to let fall. Caroline, urged perhaps by a desperate instinct to snatch at

something which was pleasure, had provided herself with a basket of apricots, and was eating away with a sort of fierce steadiness. The little barefooted children hung round with envious and admiring eyes. Fortunate lady, who could afford a whole basket of fruit for her own consumption! A warm white glow, which lent a peculiar air of unreality to the scene, had succeeded to the garish sunlight of the morning. The lake lay strangely colourless and still below. Above, there was not a scrap of blue to be seen in the sky. All around a profound silence was reigning. And there was silence also between the two young people lounging contentedly on the wall. Olivia leant back and sighed with a dreamy enjoyment; she felt strangely happy, strangely at peace with herself and all the world. And Olivia had lived long enough in the world to appreciate the bits of happiness as they came to her. Her life had not been a tragic one, but it had had its complications. Perhaps she was not habitually a very cheerful person; rather given to take life too seriously, both as regarded its pains and its pleasures. And though she did not realise it at the moment, there was the charm of contrast and comparison to add keenness to her present enjoyment.

Meanwhile Tresidder was fumbling lazily in his half-dozen pockets. 'I want to show you a letter I had this morning,' he said at length, with rather uneasy carelessness; 'I thought I had it with me. I want your advice about answering it.' Olivia looked at him questioningly, then suddenly lowered her eyes. 'It was from some fellows at St. Moritz,' the young man went on, in the same tone; 'they want me to join them

there, and go for a week's walking in the Bernese Oberland.'

'Shall you go? No sooner had she spoken them than Olivia wished the words recalled.

'That depends entirely on you.' There was no mistaking the tone this time. The smiles had ceased to play about his face; the brown eyes looked up at her in all seriousness as he leaned forward, taking both her hands in his strong grasp. For a moment there was silence. Olivia turned away her head, and looked across the wide smooth lake to the pine-clad hills and snow-crowned peaks bathed in the still, warm whiteness of the mystic afternoon. Her face was flushed, her eyes were bright, her heart was beating with unusual rapidity; she did not draw away her hands. How beautiful it all was! she thought: she had had misgivings at times, but there was no doubt about it; it was a fair and well-ordered world after all! How happy she had been to-day, yesterday, the last three weeks! And this kind, handsome, high-spirited young man at her side—who looked at her so lovingly with his beautiful eyes; who listened so attentively to every word that she spoke; who was so thoughtful in a hundred ways—how far was he responsible for this new calm happiness? Would not life, passed with such a companion, be sweet indeed? How beautiful the mountains were, and the lake! How kind, how gentle, how clever he was!

And so it came to pass that Olivia Longcroft and Sydney Tresidder between them decided that the latter should *not* make that journey to St. Moritz, should entirely abandon the notion of that walking tour in the Bernese Oberland.

I shrink from conjecturing how long those two young people

might have lingered together on the wall, if Miss Meldrum (who, happily, had slumbered through a certain interesting crisis) had not woke with a start to find the afternoon considerably advanced, the sky like lead, and the atmosphere suggestive of nothing so much as a vapour-bath. She came rapidly across the parade, shading her eyes from the glare, and holding out her watch towards them: 'Miss Longcroft, Mr. Tresidder! It is half-past five; half an hour later than we appointed to meet the others at the landing-place. I have been wondering when you would feel inclined to make a move.'

They rose up like people in a dream, obediently following in Miss Meldrum's wake along the parade. But lo and behold! when they reached the landing-stage, there was not a trace of the rest of their party to be seen. 'I have no doubt,' said Tresidder, 'that they have gone by the five-o'clock steamer, and left us to our fate. I'm not sure that we don't deserve it, are you, Miss Meldrum?' Caroline tossed her head; she was beginning to suspect that that afternoon's siesta of hers had not passed unnoticed; but indeed her suspicions were groundless. A dark-eyed young man, in picturesque boatman's costume, came up to Tresidder, pouring out a torrent of hideous Swiss-German *patois*, rather to the Englishman's bewilderment. Sydney turned away half-laughing, and addressed himself to Caroline; indeed, there was something quite like rudeness in the way in which he completely ignored Miss Longcroft's presence, throwing her never so much as a word or a glance. 'The fellow wants us to go back in that absurd cockleshell of his,' he said, 'one of those ridiculous sham gondolas with two gondo-

liers. What do you think of it, Miss Meldrum?

Caroline hesitated and objected: it would take a long time; they would be late for *table d'hôte*.

'The lake is as smooth as glass. We sha'n't be more than three-quarters of an hour at the utmost, the fellow says.' Tresidder distinctly inclined towards the boat. Nobody had consulted Olivia, perhaps because she was keeping in the background, dreamy-eyed and silent; but she did not seem to notice the omission. Well, the end of it was that they yielded to the boatman's wiles, and were soon well out in the middle of the lake, the light flat boat moving rapidly across the still surface of leaden-hued water. The two boatmen stood up strong and sturdy, skilfully wielding the long poles; Tresidder sat opposite the ladies, talking vigorously to Miss Meldrum, while he inwardly recalled the smile in Olivia's eyes, the touch of her fingers when he had handed her into the boat a few minutes before. Suddenly Caroline paused in the midst of a sentence.

'I am sure I felt a drop of rain.'

'By Jove! so do I now.' Tresidder looked up at the sky as he spoke.

'And I,' said Olivia, speaking for the first time.

'We all felt a drop of rain, like Goldsmith's dinner-party, who "all kept a corner."' Sydney spoke lightly, but his face had grown grave.

It was the work of a moment; a transformation-scene—a deed of magic. The sky had grown purple, and seemed as though it would descend and close round them. The gray still water was turbid and black, save where an ominous white line could be descried making its way in the direction of the

boat. The fair lake was horrible, monstrous, swollen out of all proportion; the very mountains were thin, shadowy, insignificant; the lake, the sky had swallowed up the landscape.

And now the rain and hail came pouring down—a hard stinging sheet; the lightning flashed, the thunder rolled and crashed among the hills; a stiff breeze sprang up, lashing the water into formidable waves. The little craft—flat-bottomed, ill-trimmed, light as a shell—rocked and plunged, leaped and swirled. The boatmen, with faces set in a grim smile, pulled at the oars like a pair of furies. Miss Meldrum began to grow hysterical, and attempted making jokes. Tresidder, leaning all his weight on his own side of the boat, held it down by main force with both his hands. Only once he stretched out a hand and touched Olivia's; but it lay stiff, cold, unresponsive in her lap. She was sitting bolt upright, motionless, with pale face and dilated eyes, the very embodiment of cold and silent horror. Once Sydney managed to whisper, 'Whatever happens, we are together;' but the words were either lost in the rush and roar of wind and water, or they fell on indifferent ears, for Olivia made no sign. The men pulled and strained at the oars, striking out for the nearest point at which to land; but the boat was making no perceptible way. What tragic ending was destined for the day so joyously begun?

To make a long story short, and put an end to the reader's suspense, I will say at once that our travellers were not drowned; only drenched to the skin, and at least an hour late for that *table d'hôte* which, for Miss Meldrum at least, constituted so important an item in the day's work.

'Did you know,' said Tresidder, as he lifted Olivia, wet and trembling, from the boat—'did you know that there was great danger?'

'Yes, I knew,' she said; in a low voice; then they plodded in silence along the wet shore till the Pension Sonnenthal was reached.

Later that night, when they had changed their clothes, dined, described their adventures, and been duly lionised by the Pension—later on, Olivia and Sydney stole out together on to the verandah which overlooks the lake. The storm had passed, and a flood of silver moonlight lay on the peaceful scene. Now and then a distant report, followed by a rather feeble shower of sparks, told of fireworks at the big Pension up the mountain opposite. They stood in silence a moment; then Olivia spoke.

'Mr. Tresidder, I want to tell you something.'

'Miss Olivia Longcroft, I am at your service.'

'Do you remember the wall at Lucerne this afternoon, and what we said there?'

'O, I have forgotten it completely! My dearest Olivia, is anything the matter?' He took both her hands, and drew her towards him, smiling down at the earnest face uplifted to his.

'O Mr. Tresidder, forgive me! I have been rash, foolish. I have made a promise it is impossible for me to keep. I cannot marry you.'

He let fall her hands, and put his own on her shoulders.

'Do you think you have brought me out here to listen to such things?' He spoke lightly, but there was an odd sound in his voice.

She moved a step or two away from him.

Mr. Tresidder, don't think too badly of me. How shall I tell you! Out there at Lucerne this afternoon life was so different; it looked all holiday, all sunshine; and I—I was so happy!'

He came nearer to her, and would have taken her hand, but she drew it away.

'But afterwards, in the boat, when I thought I should be drowned, it was different. Things grew awfully real again. I felt then that it was all a mistake about you and me. I did not think about you; I was frightened—I did not want to die. It made no difference that you were with me.'

Her voice died away, but she stood looking up at him steadily with glowing gray eyes.

For answer, he stooped and took her in his arms.

'My darling, do you think you are going to get rid of me as easily as all this? You don't know yet with whom you have to deal.' Then, changing his tone—'Olivia, go to bed at once, this instant; go to bed, and sleep away those silly fancies. My dear' (his voice changed again), 'you are tired, upset, overwrought. To-morrow morning I will speak with you about this, but not to-night.'

She freed herself from his embrace.

'But it is to-night that I must speak. Mr. Tresidder, you make it very hard for me. I must tell you all, it seems. In the boat—in the boat, I—I thought of some one else!'

There was a pause; the moon went suddenly behind a cloud, and the place grew dark. She could see the outline of his tall figure as he stood motionless, with bent head, before her.

'Mr. Tresidder, will you forgive me?'

No answer.

'Mr. Tresidder, do you think me very bad—very base?'

'I think that you have made me very unhappy, Miss Longcroft.'

They stood there a moment in silence; then he shrugged his shoulders, threw up his head, and came towards her with outstretched hand.

'Miss Longcroft, I must say good-bye' (a listener would hardly have thought it was the same voice which had pleaded so tenderly a few moments before). 'I must be up early to-morrow morn-

ing to catch the first steamer. I wonder if I can send a telegram to St. Moritz to-night? You will make my adieux for me to your people, in case I do not see them?'

'Good-bye, Mr. Tresidder.'

He held her hand a moment in his, then slowly made his way through the open window into the deserted *salle-à-manger*. On the threshold he paused.

'Thank you for a pleasant holiday, Miss Longcroft.'

'And thank you very much, Mr. Tresidder.'

TUMBLEDOWN FARM.

BY ALAN MUIR, AUTHOR OF 'CHILDREN'S CHILDREN,' 'LADY BEAUTY,'
'GOLDEN GIRLS,' ETC.

CHAPTER XXIII.

TUMBLEDOWN FARM IS HEMMED IN.

'No, 'tis impossible he should escape.'
Henry VI. Part III.

VANITY HARDWARE, with quick defiant pace, was thus leading the way to the farm, when a suspicious thought crossed the detective's mind:

'If you please, Miss Barnitt'—with emphasis on 'if'—'I shall thank you not to hurry so fast.'

'What then?'

Vanity turned upon him coolly, ready, it seemed, for anything.

'I don't exactly wish you to come in sight of the house just yet.' (The farm was hidden by the trees.) 'Some friends of mine are strolling up here,' the officer continued dryly. 'I think that until all is ready we had better not come within range of the windows. Somebody might be looking out.'

'Very good,' Vanity replied, with unshaken calmness. 'I can wait here.' She stopped at a gate, and, turning her back upon the party, rested her arm on the upper bar and looked at the landscape.

'You see, miss,' the detective said, staggered by her manner, and with more respect than he had yet shown, 'dooty has to be done.'

'Yes,' Vanity answered, without turning round, 'dooty has to be done'—mimicking his pronunciation—'and blunders have to be made. Otherwise your profession would be an idle one.'

Meanwhile, Willie Snow had been hanging awkwardly in the rear, not decided whether to return to Hampton or stay and see the affair out. He walked a few paces downhill, dreading Vanity's look if she happened to turn round, and all at once he encountered Gracious Me. Willie felt as if some gigantic toad stood face to face with him; but Gracious Me, who had drawn his own conclusions about the case, thought this was the time to ingratiate himself with the husband of his late employer.

'She ain't much, sir,' he said, indicating Vanity with his thumb, 'and she never ~~was~~ much, sir. Your good lady and me's been instrumental in finding of her out, sir.'

There he stood, with his swollen face and yellow eyes and greasy attire, touching his cap for reward, and looking such a model of shambling infamy that Willie's face turned crimson with shame.

'Look here!' Willie cried furiously, 'if you ever dare to speak to me again—I'll—I'll—d'ye hear?'

He left something to the imagination of Gracious Me, but at the same time advanced towards him in a dangerous way.

Gracious Me made no reply, for, reading the wrath in Willie Snow's countenance, he hastily concluded that his time was at hand, and disappeared round the corner with remarkable rapidity, looking more like a toad than ever.

Now, for the first time, Willie observed that a stranger was loitering about with an air something like his own—as of a man undecided whether to go or stay. This was a short personage with gray hair, smooth-shaven face, and the manner—so Willie Snow fancied—of a shopman. As this man eyed Willie curiously and seemed anxious to speak, Willie, who, above all things, wished to avoid Vanity, turned about to the stranger :

‘Do you know anything of this extraordinary affair?’

‘My firm has reason to know a good deal,’ the man answered. ‘We have lost property to the value of five thousand three hundred pounds in connection with it.’

‘Five thousand three hundred?’ Willie echoed, aghast. ‘What a sum of money, to be sure!’

‘Yet, seeing, too, you might carry it away in your waistcoat pocket,’ continued the small man—‘if, that is to say, the waistcoat was large enough—why then, you see, the wonder ceases.’

‘Robbery of notes?’

‘Not notes, sir. But very portable property for all that—very portable. You might carry enough to buy an annuity for the Emperor of Russia in a cigar-case; and enough to pay off the National Debt in an eighteen-penny leather bag. It has been a terrible loss to us, sir; but as wonderful a robbery as ever I heard of.’

‘Tell me,’ Willie said, dropping his voice, ‘how is this young—person connected with it? She is not the thief?’

‘There, sir,’ the small man answered, speaking, it seemed, for the detective police force and for the plundered firm, ‘you have us. Up to last week we knew very little. At this present moment we are practically in the dark.

If it had not been for a cat’s-eye we should have had no light on the subject at all.’

Willie Snow was quite staggered at this. He had heard of the luminous properties of the eyes of Tom cats, when the animals are excited and the optical circumstances favourable; but the statement that the light from the eye of a cat had been applied to the purposes of discovering a burglary filled him with admiration for the sagacity and resource of the detective police.

‘You see, here it was,’ the other continued, not noticing the surprise he awakened: ‘the cat’s-eye had a curious flaw in it, right at the back—’

‘Well now,’ Willie said, ‘this is the most astonishing thing I ever heard of! Go on, please.’

‘I see that cat’s-eye,’ continued the little man, dropping his voice to an awful whisper—‘see it in a shop-window near College Green, Bristol, set in diamonds.’

Light broke upon Willie. The cat’s-eye was a precious stone, but as we are not great people for jewelry near Hampton, he had never heard the gem mentioned before.

‘I see,’ he cried, ‘you are speaking of a precious stone. I was wondering—’

‘Now, sir, if you please,’ the small man said, ‘don’t say that you thought as four detective police would follow a man from county to county because he had run away with the eye out of a live cat, sir! It was a *genuine* cat’s-eye, sir; nothing belonging to an animal; a jewel, sir, a jewel, the size of a lady’s thumb, and we were proud of it!’

‘And you saw it in Bristol?’

‘Near College Green, Bristol, sir. I was looking in at the window, as you might be, thinking of nothing at all, and I saw a

stone which I seemed to recognise. I looked at it, and as sure as I am standing in my shoes that eye seemed to wink at me. I looked deeper: there was the identical flaw far down. Then say I, "Land at last." We followed it up, and here we are.'

'But surely,' Willie said, wondering what the answer would be, 'you do not connect the—the young lady with that?'

'That is the mystery, sir. This young lady and her father have been for some time travelling about, or, rather, going from place to place. The father, so far as can be discovered, is a quiet, good old man—fond of his church, they say, when he can get there; and he has been known to ask if such and such a ministry was improving. Steady, respectable old gentleman. And his daughter seems fond of him, too.'

'Well,' Willie said impatiently, 'what next?'

'Why, sir, wherever these two go—at least, wherever they have gone up to this time—a man has been observed to be connected with them, coming to their house by night—never seen by day—but evidently upon most intimate terms. This man has been at last identified as a burglar and worse than a burglar; and the police believe that they are on the eve of one of the most important discoveries that have been made for years. In fact, England will ring with it—at least so they say.'

'Am I to understand,' Willie asked, drawing nearer to the other, and speaking in a low whisper, 'that you think the young woman is connected with this strange man, without her father's knowledge?'

'Well, not exactly, perhaps,' the other answered. 'But, you see, the old gentleman ain't very sighty, and is hard of hearing, and so forth, and our view is as he is

kept pretty much in the dark. There is no question that he is a steady goer. He has been watched sharply by people with eyes in their heads, and he has been reported a steady goer.'

'Well,' Willie Snow murmured, recalling all he knew, 'I cannot make this out.'

'Sir,' the little man said, facing him with a superior air, 'when the detective police force, who have been on the scent this month or more, and has a shelf of note-books on the subject—when they, sir, cannot make it out, it would be surprising if you could unravel it five minutes after you hear a little bit of the story in a hayfield.'

The small man so adjusted his emphasis as to suggest that the hayfield complicated the problem amazingly.

'Look there,' said Willie, seeing that the detective moved forward; 'they are going into the Farm. I must see this matter out.'

And in a strange sort of way, much like a walking funeral, the party moved on towards Tumbledown Farm.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE SECRET IS REVEALED.

'O, think what anxious moments pass
between
The birth of plots and their last fatal
periods.
O, 'tis a dreadful interval of time,
Filled up with horror all, and big with
death.'

ADDISON.

It was now plain that the detectives had taken such precautions that the escape of any one from the Farm was an impossibility. Another officer in plain clothes had joined my friend, and two men were to be seen approaching the Farm, carelessly as it seemed, but they, too, were there on business. The police had, in

fact, traced the strange man to the Farm the night before, and they had the best reason for knowing that he had not left since. I suppose they had set a watch. Anyhow, the theory of the police was that their man was within the walls at that moment.

All this time Vanity showed no agitation. She led the way with her swift fearless step, and the detective looked at her with an admiration he could not conceal. The more sure he was that his man lay in the house, the more he admired the girl's daring. There was something professional about it. It was bold skilful play, where nervousness and incapacity might well have been pardoned; and such play the officer honoured, feeling meanwhile a certain elation on his own account, as he thought that these clever people were, after all, fairly caught in his snare. He gave vent to his admiration later on in this way; and as his words embody the experience of the man of a very remarkable world, I write it down here.

'I would give money to know what women are made of. Courage! Why, I have known some of 'em go right up the very crack of their doom, and never move an eyelash. The odd thing is that they can't do it for themselves. Let themselves be in danger, and they run and squeak like mice; but let it be to save a miserable bit of a child or a scapegrace of a husband, and a cage of tigers wouldn't frighten 'em. Which make me always say, I would like to know what women is made of.'

More like a walking funeral than ever, the party stopped as they got up to the door. Somehow Willie Snow felt a sickening at heart as he saw how the officers had hemmed the place in, and

how serious and determined they seemed, as if the business might be death to one or other of the party. The only man that seemed quite easy in his manner, and even polite, was my stout friend. There was no bravado about him, but he went at his duty with an unconcerned air that was pretty. So I have seen in a London hospital, where a great operation was going to be performed, and all the students gathered, pale and breathless, the chief surgeon step out, knife in hand, with a smile on his face; and the thing was done before you had your eyes quite settled to watch.

'Andrew,' the stout man said to the companion at his side, 'you and I walk in. Now, miss, I go first; you second, if you please; and this gentleman third.'

Easy he and easy she. If the pair had been footmen with silk legs and powdered hair, and she my lady, Miss Vanity could not have treated them with a more haughty indifference. And so they walked into the parlour; and Willie followed, not knowing (he told me afterwards) what he did, but like a man in a dream.

The parlour was quiet and orderly. There sat the old gentleman, with a tumbler of water beside him, and a newspaper spread open on the table, and he groping out the words and pronouncing them to himself, as I have noticed deaf people sometimes do. He looked up at the party with great curiosity, and after a wondering gaze from the detectives to Vanity, and back again, he called out,

'Who are these people?'

Vanity went to his side, and replied, in that high-low voice in which we speak to the deaf,

'No one of consequence, father; it is only the landlord—'

And then, for the first time, that poor young woman's heart

began to beat, and she spoke with a tremble in her voice, and actually cast a beseeching look at the detective, as much as to say, 'Spare me all you can.'

And he, who seemed really good-natured, and treated her as if she were a lady of his own profession, only in another department, called out to the old man.

'We heard, sir, that there was something wrong in the upper story of the house.'

Which was cleverly put, you observe.

'What story?' asked the old man, in a most querulous tone.

'The upper story of the house, father,' Vanity said, in the deaf man's voice, as before.

The old man looked up, and scrutinised the party with a penetrating air.

'He must be a good landlord, if he comes to see about repairs before he is asked to.'

'Do you mind that, Andrew?' the stout man remarked to his companion coolly, but with an air of amusement. 'Old gent has got his wits about him still. Now, let us see.'

He passed out of the room, and Andrew with him.

Now, for the first time, Vanity seemed to observe that Willie Snow was in the room, and she dealt him rather an imperious look, which made him very uncomfortable.

'Who is this?' her father asked petulantly; 'landlord's son?'

'Only a friend, father,' Vanity answered. 'Don't mind him. They will be gone in a few minutes.'

Willie saw she trembled now excessively, and he remarked that the old man gazed at him with searching eyes. Did he recognise him? Did he know anything? Then Vanity walked up to her

former lover, and said in a low voice,

'Why you come in here, I don't know. As you are here now, you must stay till these men have gone.'

Willie stood feeling as he had never felt in his life before; but he could not utter a word, and Vanity returned to her father's side.

The trampling of feet was heard overhead, as of men going from room to room, and two or three times there was a heavy sound of furniture being dragged over the floor.

Old Hardware looked up from his reading again, and asked, now in a really angry manner,

'Why do you not answer me? Who are these men? What business have they here?' As if he had forgotten her explanation.

Willie saw that Vanity trembled, and her voice, as she pitched it high for her father's deaf ears, was tremulous with agitation.

'Only the landlord, father, I tell you—only the landlord.'

Her tones must have been audible all over the house; but the old man held up his hand inquiringly, and made her repeat the words, and then, grumbling, settled down to his paper once more.

In a few minutes the heavy downward tread of the detectives was heard on the stairs, and the two men reëntered the room, the chief looking puzzled and disappointed. He tried, however, to hide his vexation under an air of surly civility.

'I have made a mistake, miss,' he said to Vanity. 'Fact is, I have been misinformed. I hope you will admit that I have tried to make the job as pleasant as I could.'

All this time he was eyeing round with a dissatisfied air.

'What does he say?' old Hardware called out, gazing with a kind of angry curiosity from face to face, and speaking in tones which faltered with age and anger.

'O father,' Vanity called out impatiently, 'nothing of consequence. He only says the roof is all sound.'

'Says what is sound?' the old man cried, in accents full of suspicion.

'The roof! the roof!' Vanity called out. Then, turning to the detective, she said,

'If you have done, do go. I shall have such an afternoon with him, if he once gets upset.'

And truly old Hardware was looking round with an expression of distrust which seemed to show that he was not altogether blind to the fact that he was being deceived. The detective, after one more moment of troubled irresolution, was just about to obey Vanity, when his eyes were arrested by something which caused his whole face to light up.

The room was papered, and right behind the chair in which old Hardware sat was what seemed, at the first glance, to be a door, so neatly arranged amidst a flowery pattern that it was almost invisible. In an instant the detective guessed that there was a closet in the wall, and all the mystery was clear to him. His prisoner was standing within two yards, hidden by that paper screen! He walked straight up to old Hardware.

'Now, old gentleman, "found out" is the word. Get up, if you please.'

All the officer meant was that the old man should make way for him to examine the closet. But in this he made a fatal mistake. The closet, after all, existed only in his own imagination, and the

clumsy wooden partition, which suggested the idea, was a partition, and nothing more. But he whom the officer addressed misunderstood the words, and in an instant the mystery was revealed indeed. Suddenly the aged decrepit figure sprang up with the energy of a lion. He tore off his cap, and with that his spectacles and a wig and beard artfully made in one piece. There stood before the astounded group Vanity's father, indeed, but not the tottering graybeard that Vanity's father was supposed to be. A man of forty-five or fifty, tall and handsome, of powerful build, whose face glared with rage and defiance.

Such was the transformed figure which leaped out of the disguise. And Willie could see even in this face, whose every feature was tense with defiance and animosity, a fierce outline of the irresistible beauty which, in the daughter, had taken a shape so enchanting. Father and daughter, they stood face to face, and the other figures for the moment seemed to sink into the background. Hardware concentrated all the rage of his expression upon his daughter, who seemed ready to swoon with terror. In her pallor he read the proof of his own furious conjecture, that his daughter had betrayed him; and while the detectives, petrified with amazement, paused, though this was not for five seconds, he had time for all he wished to do. Drawing a revolver from his breast, he pointed it at Vanity, and, with a terrible cry, discharged it into her side. The poor young woman stood erect one moment, gazing at him with a fixity almost as dreadful as his own; and he, as if he would answer the look, called out,

'You have not deceived me with all your pretence! You sold

me, you sold me! Take your reward!

And as she sank down upon the ground, he leaped across her body, and dashed to the door which led up-stairs.

CHAPTER XXV.

TUMBLEDOWN FARM IN FLAMES.

'It is very certain that, as to all persons who have hanged themselves, or killed themselves in any other way, 'tis the devil who has put the cord round their necks or the knife to their throats.'

MARTIN LUTHER, *Table Talk*.

WHAT followed was dreadful indeed. Hardware flung off the detectives with a fury which caused these two strong men to fall back like weakly boys. A narrow twisted flight of stairs led to the rooms above, and these stairs were shut off from the room by a wooden door. The fugitive opened this door, sprang through, and shut it upon himself with a crash; and they heard a bolt drawn, which signified that he had fastened himself in. And then, for the first time, the detectives seemed to recover their presence of mind. It takes time to tell all this; but I should say that, ten seconds before, the old grumbling antiquity was groping over his newspaper unsuspected. Had he not misunderstood the officer, all would have been safe now.

The detectives, I say, recovered their presence of mind. The chief ran outside, and shouted to the watchers that they must look after the windows, and then both set themselves to break open the staircase door. The big man hurled himself at it, and the old wood gave way with a crash, and through the splintered panels the way up-stairs lay open; only a man, while working his way upwards, could have been shot like

a rat. The detective hesitated a moment, as the bravest man might, and immediately a powerful odour filled the lower room. Meanwhile, the detective, looking up, saw Hardware standing at the top of the stairs, holding in one hand a lighted candle and a revolver, and in the other a huge drinking-glass.

'Come down here!' the detective shouted. 'If you were fifty men you can't escape. Drop the pistol, and don't put a rope round your neck for the sake of another quarter-hour by yourself in that room.'

Cool language, all things considered.

Hardware answered with a roar of laughter.

'Come down!' he cried. 'No, thank you; I am master here. Come up, you. The way is narrow, and you are broad enough. Still, if I take care, I may miss you; I may not make your wife a widow; come along and try.'

'Now, my good man,' the officer said, with a reasoning air, but watching Hardware narrowly, and making ready to dart back if he should fire, 'you are a clever fellow, and you *know* the game's up. You have played well, but you *know* the game's up. Don't be a madman.'

'A madman! a madman!' roared Hardware, catching at the word with another terrible laugh. 'Come up-stairs, mister; up into the madman's room. Don't be afraid of catching the complaint. I promise you will be safe enough before your foot is on the top step. Up to the madman's room, and let's have a dance.'

The officer hesitated.

'Here's your good health!' shouted Hardware. 'May you never die until you taste blue plum. Your health, my man! your health! your very good health!'

The detective was meditating how he could break his way through, or whether he could coax his man down, when Hardware, having drained his tumbler, hurled it savagely at the officer. Quick as the detective was, he saved himself only by a hair's-breadth; and the glass was flung with such fury, that it scarcely made a crash as it shivered upon the floor.

'Your health for forty years!' roared Hardware with his diabolical laugh, 'and, after that, your lifetime! Walk up-stairs and have a chat with the old man!'

In the moment while the officer drew back, Hardware must have carried out his awful scheme, for when the detective looked up the stairs again all was raging flame. Hardware had deluged the place with paraffin, or some inflammable liquid of the sort, and had set the whole on fire. At the top he stood as before, looking now like some gigantic fiend.

'Come up to the madman's room!' he yelled again. 'Hot flame, cold lead! all ready! Up to the madman's room!'

'Water! water!' the detective shouted to his companions; 'water here, or the whole house will be a-fire!'

Another roar of laughter came from above.

'Won't you come up! won't you join me in a glass! I am going to have another. A glass with the madman! a glass in the fire with the madman!'

Then they heard another loud crash, the meaning of which was evident the next instant. Hardware must have thrown a great glass vessel down the stairs filled with paraffin, for immediately after the crash a stream of liquid flame ran out into the room. Another crash followed, and another, and

now the room began to swim in fire.

Until this moment, no one had thought of wounded Vanity; and there she lay on the ground. But now the flame, running across the floor, had just set fire to her dress, when the detective caught her up in his arms and dragged her out of the house. Indeed, the whole party had only time to rush out before the fire filled the room.

And no sooner were they in the little garden, than Hardware flung open the window, and glared out upon the group with a face from which every expression except triumph, defiance, and hatred had vanished. He held his revolver in his hand.

'Five chambers!' he shouted out, 'and only one wanted within doors. Which shall I have first?'

He glared round wildly, and saw Gracious Me, and his face lit up with a diabolical recognition.

'Ah, my friend! my little friend Peeping Tom! Why not begin with Peeping Tom? Let the ugliest in the company be helped first.'

He pointed his revolver at wretched Gracious Me, who was too frightened to run away, and fell on his knees pleading for life with fearful energy. Meanwhile, the smoke began to rush out of the window in clouds, and half hid the awful face of Hardware. But he roared afresh with laughter, and did not fire at first, seeming to enjoy the terror of the wretch below. How many lives that little pause saved no man can say.

'Let the ugliest be helped first!' cried Hardware again. 'Oho, Peeping Tom! Open your mouth and shut your eyes, and see what somebody sends you!'

Little Gracious, paralysed with agony and fear, poured out his entreaties for mercy, and Hardware answered with that awful

laugh, which seemed defiance of God and man.

'Why, a blind man could hit Peeping Tom! What is he like? Peeping Tom is just like Aunt Sally's husband—better to shoot at than the wife. O, how lonely the widow will feel this night when she hears! Now, little target!'

Crack went the pistol, and down, without a sound, dropped little Gracious Me; and then, from the angle of the house, they heard a yell of rage from Hardware, for, in that instant, his other victims had got out of reach; and the smoke began to roll out in volumes, and, in less time than it takes to pen these lines, the whole of old Tumbledown Farm was in flames. And yet (to count the time again) it was not more than five minutes since that old blind, deaf, decrepit figure had been groping over his newspaper in the corner! But Hardware's plans were all laid long before. It was plain that the man was resolved never to be taken alive. The summer air grew dark with smoke, and every room in the Farm was full of fire.

But within, the most profound silence prevailed. None was able to tell whether or not Hardware had fired another shot. He may have done so; but the last that was ever seen or known of him was when he discharged his revolver at Gracious Me. The detectives made some pretence of trying to enter the burning house, but they soon abandoned the attempt. Willie Snow dashed down the hill to Hampton for assistance; but what was assistance good for? Why, in ten minutes, somebody whispered with ashen lips that the fire was going out!

CHAPTER XXVI.

POOR VANITY HARDWARE.

'Come not when I am dead
To drop thy foolish tears upon my grave,
To trample round my fallen head,
And vex the unhappy dust thou wouldst not save.
Pass on, weak heart, and leave me where I lie.
Go by, go by.' LORD TENNYSON.

For a few moments, in that wild and hurried excitement, Vanity was forgotten. She lay upon a grassy bank, and none asked if she were alive or dead. But the detective went to her side, and saw that she breathed, although her eyes were closed and she was quite unconscious. With professional presence of mind, and with great gentleness of hand, he opened her lips and poured a little brandy into her mouth; and perhaps he saved her life, for when, an hour after, she was taken into the hospital, the doctor declared that she had just escaped death by exhaustion—a few beats of the pulse more and she would have been past help and hope. Perhaps just as well, say I; but Providence knows best.

But let us return for one moment to the burning farm. As I said, the most complete silence prevailed within the walls. Hardware was neither seen, nor was any motion of him heard again. Just after the whisper went round that the fire was going out, the roof fell in with a crash, and a shower of sparks and renewed clouds of smoke told them all they had been too hasty. But long before any assistance arrived from the village, the fire was over. Hardware had made elaborate preparations for a conflagration; and the fire ran from room to room, and seemed to meet fuel everywhere. Its rapidity was equalled by its heat and fury;

for when the ruins were searched, there was absolutely nothing but a charred mass. Rake it with a rake, and pore over every handful, and sift it to the last pinch through a sieve, all was ashes, and nothing but ashes. They expected, perhaps, to find diamonds, pearls, emeralds, rubies, sapphires, cat's-eyes, and so forth. Blessed are they who expect not! Have you ever burned a lot of old letters in a corner of the grate? Within the four blackened walls of old Tumbledown Farm nothing was left but such thin ashes. All that raging flames could consume had vanished. It seemed as if you could carry away what remained of the furniture and other property in one small coal-scuttle. And there the old walls stood that day in the blue summer air, and there they stood for long enough in the balmy sunshine and in dark winter storms, like the monument of a blasted life, saying to us all that the way of transgressors is hard.

As Willie Snow came back with help a strange thing occurred. At a turn of the pleasant lane, under a shady tree where he and Vanity many a time had stood, there met him a party of bearers carrying his former sweetheart down to the hospital. Now, I don't by any means want to pile horror upon horror, and as Willie told it me, there was no horror here; for she lay white and calm, beautiful beyond words, every trace of evil gone, the sweetest repose upon her face. He thought she was already dead. Well for her if, with such a face, so still, so sad, so full of whispers of forgiveness and peace beyond—O well if, with such a face, she had in very truth passed out of this wicked world that she knew so well.

'Is she quite dead?' Willie gasped.

'No, but going fast enough,' some one replied.

'O God, spare her life!' the young man cried. (For, you see, he could not but remember old times, married as he was.) 'O God, hear my prayer, and spare her life!'

Perhaps sometimes these prayers had better die away in our lower air, and never be heard above. Perhaps sometimes, in after years, we may have to say farewell to those who then we summon back—a longer farewell than that of the grave. Farewell to honour, to truth; farewell to hope of goodness. Anyhow, Miss Vanity Hardware did not die then, as you shall see. But where have I got to? How this chapter rambles about here and there! For, you see, towards the end of a story there are so many loose ends to be gathered up, as the ladies say!

Under the excitement of the time, I suppose, the detectives cast off their silent ways, and answered questions freely. Hardware was 'wanted;' that everybody guessed. Wanted for what? Part has been told already. About two years ago there had been a most extraordinary jewel robbery at Birmingham. From 'information received'—that is their cautious way of putting it—the police were led to believe that a man named Barnitt had been connected with the robbery, and this man they traced into connection with old Hardware and his daughter.

Now, in this place I had better relate what came out afterwards, but was not at the time known to the police. Hardware was of respectable family, and had even been at Cambridge for one or two terms. But he turned to evil ways, drank, gambled, and took to the racecourse. Subsequently it was found that he had 'reformed,' and had married the

daughter of a clergyman. Ladies with small fortunes, beware of penniless gentry who have reformed! No sooner was Hardware in possession of this poor creature's little bit of money than he blazed off in every sort of riot and excess. One daughter was born to them, and the mother stuck to him through all his vicissitudes and profligacy. Barnitt had early in life been celebrated as an amateur actor, and now, in his life as an adventurer, he took to the stage, and became a small manager. So he lived on for several years. His wife died; his daughter, whose beauty and vivacity were well known, went upon the stage, and, for a time, father and daughter did tolerably well. The last that was heard of him in that capacity was at a wooden theatre in Carlisle, where he was playing in *The Lady of Lyons*, Miss Vanity, under the name of Mabel Darrell, playing Pauline. After that the two vanished, and when they reappeared, Miss Hardware had an aged father, very decrepit, but of excellent character, rather pious than otherwise, you observe, and particular about the ministry he sat under! Under this disguise, throwing it off artfully and by night, he had committed several burglaries, and left the police nowhere at all. It is fair to say that there never was any proof that his daughter was connected with his crimes, or even knew of them; but must she not have asked where the money came from?

Barnitt or Hardware had not only been in several burglaries, but there was little doubt that his was the hand which had shot one of the Birmingham police, who had tried to capture him. The detectives fully believed that Hardware—or Barnitt, rather—had learned that the police were

on his track, and their 'theory' was that he intended to set fire to the Farm, and to lead them to the belief that he and his daughter had perished in the flames: which would have been very artful, you observe, and might have been carried out by night. Off he would have gone to Spain or America, with his pockets full of cat's-eyes and diamonds and such. But, clever as the scheme was, you observe, he could not accomplish it, for after all, as we said above, the way of transgressors is hard. Which applies even to the cleverest!

CHAPTER XXVII.

EXTRAORDINARY CONDUCT OF GRACIOUS ME.

'Counterfeit? I lie, I am no counterfeit. To die is to be a counterfeit; for he is but the counterfeit of a man who hath not the life of a man; but to counterfeit dying when a man thereby liveth is to be no counterfeit, but the true and perfect image of life indeed. The better part of valour is—discretion; in the which better part I have saved my life.'

Sir John Falstaff.

BUT will you mind my telling you one comic bit? I do not wish you to say old Doctor Book is nothing but a horror-maker. Yet perhaps you will say there is not much of comic in what follows, but can a man give more than he has got? You can't take a shilling out of your purse if it is not in, and you can't find fun in a story unless it has been put there first. However, perhaps you will smile over this, if you don't exactly laugh.

Gracious Me lay stretched on the grass, just where he had fallen. At last, when the excitement had somewhat subsided, they went to examine the dead body, and were surprised to observe that the eyes remained open. Still more the observers were astonished to see

the said eyes blinking in a curious way at a particular blade of grass which stood erect close to the nose of the corpse.

In short, examination led to the conclusion that Gracious Me had not yet breathed his last. Still closer examination suggested the hope that the wound might not be mortal, after all; and that with care and nourishment little Gracious might recover and be restored to his friends and the public. Hereupon, after several terrified inquiries as to the exact posture of affairs, Gracious tried to get on his feet, and the compassionate bystanders raised him and propped him up with great humanity. After which, Gracious looked round with a stupid expression.

'Where were you hit?' inquired one of the compassionate persons.

'Which side did the ball enter?'

'Neither side,' said little Gracious, trembling still.

'Then it lodged in the breast?'

'Not exactly,' Gracious answered. 'I believe it went over my head.'

'Then you were not hit at all?' exclaimed the good Samaritan.

'You see, this is how it occurred,' little Gracious said, recovering his spirits somewhat. 'I was here, and *he* was—there. He was going to fire, when it struck me—I can't tell why—that if I was to drop down, do you see, and lie quite still, the affair might blow over. So I did. Hit? bless you, no! Not within a yard of me!'

The good Samaritan who was propping Gracious Me up was a member of our Hampton Mutual Improvement and Debating Society, and a very clever and promising young man. He was greatly struck with the fact that Gracious Me had saved his life by adopting a device

similar to that of Sir John Falstaff at the battle of Shrewsbury. He considered that it might turn out to be a case of psychical coincidence and worthy of careful investigation. As he observed, an unsophisticated vulgarian—I give his words—like Gracious Me was a more promising subject for inquiry than an educated man, in whose mind various currents of volition and intelligence might be running. So this clever young gentleman drew up a set of questions, which with the answers, and what he called a memoir on the entire incident, he laid before the Hampton Debating Society at the next meeting. The questions and answers may interest you.

Question 1: 'Was Mr. Me in the habit of reading the works of Shakespeare?'

Answer: 'What spere? Would the gemman mind repeating the name? Was not in the habit of reading such works.'

(Note: The crass ignorance of the subject becomes apparent from this reply.)

Question 2: 'Had Mr. Me ever attended a theatrical performance in which, during the representation of a battle, a fat man had dropped down apparently dead, and had revived at the conclusion of the fight?'

Answer: 'Might have seen something of the kind at a pantomime—nowhere else.'

Question 3: 'Had Mr. Me ever heard of Sir John Falstaff?'

Answer: 'Was blowed if he could tell.'

(Note: The subject became irritable at this point, and the examination was suspended.)

From these materials the young gentleman worked up a highly interesting 'memoir,' contending that the action of Mr. Me was the combined result of heredity and unconscious cerebration. In all

probability, some possibly remote ancestor of Mr. Me had been an admirer of the character of Falstaff, and had been greatly impressed with his fertility of resource at the battle of Shrewsbury. This ancestor, no doubt, had often gone over the scene in his own mind, and thus established a species of automatic action, which by means of the law of heredity was transmitted to Mr. Me, and, apart from any conscious volition on his part, the act was repeated when the environment suggested it.

Upon this memoir they had a grand discussion in our Hampton Debating Society. There was a full house, and the speaking on both sides was of the highest order, so they said. Another equally clever young gentleman moved 'the previous question,' and, on a division, the numbers were :

For Heredity and Unconscious Cerebration	9
For the Previous Question	7
Majority for the original resolution	2

So the resolution was entered on the minutes of the Society, and some people said the whole question was most interesting. For my part I think it all stuff, but wishing to raise a smile I set it down here.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

MISS AND I TALK THINGS OVER.

AFTER all, the story of Tumbledown Farm must end with a sigh, and not a smile. Vanity Hardware was taken to the hospital, where for seven weeks she lay between life and death. Suddenly she began to mend. Then one morning, when some kind person called to ask after her, the reply was she had gone. Where? No-

body knew. Neither doctor nor chaplain could tell anything except that she was gone. Whipped off, I say, like the brazen woman she was, without thanks or farewell; and no doubt she is now luring somebody into mischief with her wicked, beautiful eyes.

So the story ends. Think of that selfish, heartless, scheming young woman, and how she fascinated Willie Snow; and how near she went to ruining him! Observe further that the young man is now living respectably with a reputable wife, and two young children who promise to grow up credits to the village. Then you may be disposed to receive the moral of my novel of Tumbledown Farm, which is sound, if homely :

If ever a young man is in doubt what course he should take in life, being pulled by different reasons first this way and then that, let him ask which is the respectable course, and take that, and he will do well.

Look at the proof. Willie Snow is well and happy and prosperous to-day; and his wicked sweetheart is just where she ought to be—out of sight and out of mind!

As I read that last word, young miss turned to me. Until now she had looked out of window, which was a way she had.

'Is that all?'

'That is all, miss,' I answered; 'enough too, I think.'

Miss only turned to the window again and shook her head sadly.

'It was a sorrowful end for poor Vanity!'

'Sin brings sorrow, miss,' I said; 'where chapter first is sin, chapter last is sure to be sorrow.'

She did not notice that; her heart seemed full—full to the very brim.

'Was nothing ever heard of Vanity again?'

As she asked me her eyes were full to the brim too.

'Well, miss,' I replied, 'I was not going to tell you. How *shall* I tell you? It is not for you to hear!'

'But you must tell me,' she said seriously; 'I must hear every word about Vanity.'

'Miss,' said I, 'I hope I may manage it right. There is—or there was—a young fellow in this village who was fond of going to London to see "life." Such were his words—to see life. He saw enough life to finish his own, for he is lying in the churchyard yonder now; but that is neither here nor there. This young gent came home from one of his expeditions, and said he had seen Miss Hardware.'

'Where, Doctor, where?'

She said this because I stopped.

'That is my difficulty, miss. How shall I begin? Well, miss, he said—mind, I am only telling you what the young man said—it was after midnight, in a public room, let me call it; a public supper-room, full of people; gas-lights blazing, wine flowing, bad words flying hither and thither, sinful faces all around, wicked laughter, never an honest face, never an honest word! Vice and sin, miss, vice and sin on every side; not fit for ears like yours to hear.'

Her eyes were on the ground now.

'Go on, Doctor.'

'There, with a glass of champagne in her hand, sitting among a noisy party of gaily-dressed people, herself the gayest, the noisiest, the most wicked, as it seemed, was Vanity Hardware!'

'Go on, Doctor.'

'There is no more,' said I; 'she never was heard of after.'

'Was the young man sure it was really Vanity?'

'He said so. He was a sharp young man.'

Miss stood a long time, looking out of window again, and at last, to my great surprise, I saw a tear run down her cheek.

'O miss,' I said, 'don't waste honest grief on such as her.'

'But,' she answered, in a broken voice, 'I wanted Vanity to turn and live. I believed that after all she would turn and live.'

'Ah, miss, Vanity was always on the downward road; now slow, now fast; now laughing, now crying; always on the downward road.'

'Not always, Doctor; Willie Snow could have saved her at the first.'

'How could the young man have managed that, miss?'

'By loving her through all.'

I shook my head.

'O Doctor,' she said, answering me, so to speak, 'do you understand a woman's heart?'

'Miss,' said I, 'I don't think I do—not altogether.'

'Because, Doctor, in the lowest depth of every woman's heart there lies love. Love will save a woman when nothing else can. If Willie had but loved her on, Vanity would have been saved. I am sure she would have been saved!'

'But you see, miss,' said I—for this point I could not yield—'Willie Snow was a respectable young man. It was not his place to be saving such as Vanity Hardware. He is married, miss, respectably, and has two children and a steady thrifty wife, and a good income and good prospects.'

'And the woman for whom he promised to live and die—O Doctor, I cannot bear to think of it. I wish you had never told me the story at all.'

'Well, miss,' said I—and I confess that I sighed as I spoke—

'perhaps I ought at the beginning
to have warned you what was
coming at—the end.'

Yes, I spoke the word. But I
was never so mistaken in my life.

The story of Vanity Hardware
was not more than half told.
Strange facts came to light years
after, and the novel cannot even
be 'concluded in our next.'

(*To be continued.*)

THE SUN CAME FORTH TOO LATE.

ONE April morn I travelled far to view
A scene whose charm my labour would repay ;
Yet as I neared the spot no sun broke through
The thickening clouds that marred the vernal day.

Long, long impatient did I wait and gaze,
Until the orb of daylight should appear ;
But the sweet landscape lay in changeless haze,
Hueless and dark, expressionless and drear.

I left the craggy height and flowery fell,
And when my hand was on my garden-gate,
The long-veiled sun lit up my barren dell—
I heeded not: the sun came forth too late.

Thus when our gifts, like spring flowers freshly bloom,
Longed-for success refuses to appear ;
Like clouds along th' horizon darkly loom
Trouble, unrest, anxiety, and fear ;

When youth's enjoyment-power in ruin lies,
When manhood's hale maturity is past,
When wrinkles gather round the waning eyes,
Prosperity's bright sun breaks through at last.

Friends whom the old man loved in ruddy health,
The wife who bravely shared his years of toil,
These whom he loved to gladden with his wealth
Lie cold and silent in the churchyard soil.

Treasures we sighed for in our youthful power,
Treasures that manhood's heart oft craved in vain,
When tottering footsteps tell life's sunset hour,
In growing splendour crowd upon the brain.

When life is hasting to its mournful close,
And Death's sure footfall sounds within the door,
A growing tide of glittering guineas flows
To trembling hands that cannot hold the shore.

High fame may crown the statesman's furrowed brow,
Bright honours on the dying chieftain wait—
All that man lived and waited for ; but now,
Alas ! the sun of life came forth too late.

JOHN COLLETT.

TWO LETTERS FROM ITALY.

LETTER I.

'IMMERSED in day-dreams, myself a dream, I entered Italy.' Thus writes Heinrich Heine in his *Travel Pictures*, and thus can many a traveller echo after him. It is not my purpose here to speak of the Philistines, who seem to be able to enter it without emotion; the cultured certainly does not enter Italy as though she were a common land. The glowing descriptions of hundreds of prose-writers echo in his memory; the songs of thousands of poets sing in his ears; and when, added to this, Italy puts forth that subtle all-pervading glamour that is specially hers, no wonder that the traveller returned home can only rave of marble palaces, of lovely moon-lights on the lakes, of fair women and stately men, of orange-flower perfume and fireflies. But no wonder also that the men and women of the land he has visited regard him with mild amusement, as rather a harmless lunatic, or, if they belong to the lower or hotel-keeping class, as the goose that lays the golden eggs. Not that the Italians, high or low, are ignorant of or indifferent to their past grand history or to the ever-young beauties of their land. Far from it; but more ever present to them, of more immediate and burning importance, is the Italy of to-day, for which they have but so recently made serious sacrifices, in whose behalf has been shed the blood of a most noble army of martyrs. And here come these strangers—men from the woods

(*forestieri*), as we men and women *oltre monti* are still named by them, many of whom have by word and deed shown a true and active interest in their political revival, who, after having done all this, seem not to care one iota for the Italian of to-day, now that he stands there boldly before them, in all the pride of his young manhood, conscious of a noble and long ancestry. Is not this rather a puzzle? The Italian notices it, of course—what does he not notice with his quick acute perception?—shrugs his shoulders, and gives up the attempt to solve the riddle. 'These *forestieri* are too strange,' he thinks; and imaginative though he is in a sense, yet he has not knowledge enough of our upbringing and conditions to project himself into our state of mind, in order to comprehend that to us Italy is a dream, and that few of us know or care to know aught concerning the actual Italy we traverse, while our thoughts are filled with the long gone by. This indifference on the part of the intelligent traveller may, however, be justified in a measure. For one thing, there is so much to see and do in Italy that the average tourist has not time enough for that, let alone to occupy himself with the modern world. But, chief obstacle of all, the Italians are exclusive, and many English people reside months, nay, even years, in their midst, without knowing any Italians socially. The causes for this are twofold: the equally great exclusiveness of the English, the manner—up to a certain point most commendable

—in which in all those centres in which the English settle, the English colony holds together; and, prime cause of all, the indifference the English mostly show to the study of the Italian language, so that they can barely make themselves comprehended by their hosts, and are naturally on that account little welcome guests among the lively Italians, who do not care to be checked in the flow of conversation and sparkling anecdote and joke by the need to repeat and explain.

But what struck me as strangest of all, after a lengthened sojourn in a great commercial Italian city, where many English have fixed their permanent abode for some generations past, was this—that in many cases even the second and third generations, though born in the land, had not mastered its tongue. The cause—commendable again up to a certain point only—is this, that the Englishman, wherever he may happen to reside, wherever his child may be born, desires that it should become English, and from the very first these Italy-born children of Anglo-Italian parents are surrounded by English nurses and governesses, and if they are boys, are sent to English schools. English traditions are clung to with a fidelity often lacking in England itself. The very leg of mutton has been introduced, though this is a comestible wholly unknown to the Italian *cuisine*. ‘*Gamba d’Inghilterra*,’ as I heard it designated by an intelligent Italian child of three, with exquisite comprehension of the fact that this dish is the staple English comestible. In short, the Anglo-Italian out-Herods Herod. While the foreign sojourners in other lands amalgamate with the natives, as witness, for example, the Germans in Man-

chester, as patriotic, as public-spirited for land and town as any Lancashire man, John Bull abroad, and especially in a Latin country, holds himself proudly aloof, quite unaware of the fact that by so doing he grows after a time neither ‘fish, flesh, fowl, nor good red-herring;’ that he is making himself into a hybrid; that even in conservative England, matters are not stationary; and that when he returns to the mother country, he is but a sort of Rip van Winkle—a spurious edition. For there lingers in his midst the remnants of customs and superstitions only now to be found in his native land in remote country districts.

That our Italian John Bull has built for himself an English church, that he is regular in his attendance there, generous according to his capacity in its support, goes without saying. He also exercises a spiritual supervision over those English who are birds of passage in his town; and if they do not put in an appearance at service, they are at once dismissed as black sheep, and persons not to be visited. A man or woman must be well introduced indeed, or have strong personal attractions and social qualities, to cause our righteous English colony to overlook these grave offences, and be admitted nevertheless into their narrow and exclusive body. An Englishman, they contend, owes it not only to himself, but to his country, to be seen in the English church, in order that he may set an example to the heathen amid whom their tents are pitched; for to our typical Anglo-Italian a Catholic is still an idol-worshipper, *ergo* a heathen. O deliciously inconsistent Anglo-Italian! what a riddle you are, and how often you have made me laugh heartily over

your paradoxes of behaviour! Truly you strain at gnats and swallow camels.

I am thinking of your curious moral laxity, a first acquaintance with which made me wonder if these were truly my countrymen and women, decried upon the Continent as virtuous to prudishness. Truly, if you have learnt no other lessons from the Italians—and you, even you, the great nation, the salt of the earth, could learn something from ‘this inferior people,’ as in your haughty superciliousness you love to call them—you have at least learnt just that you had better have left alone. If in the matter of English customs you out-Herod Herod, truly in aping Italian domestic relationships you have also outstripped your prototypes. Men who have ‘a story,’ too openly told, women who do not hesitate to flaunt their own and their husbands’ shame, are received cordially in the drawing-rooms of these curious English people. Their peccadilloes are accepted without comment, and if one more bold than the rest ventures to protest by cold-shoulder or word, he is at once told that such action would give grave offence to ‘the colony,’ and the fear of this mysterious anger is enough to quench the slender flame of outraged virtue about to kindle. Very right are the English thus to hold together, very admirable is the feeling that prompts this action; but they might draw the line somewhere, and they do not indeed draw it at all. Of course the sinners are regular in their attendance at church, *cela va sans dire*; and consequently the doors are not locked upon them as they would be upon an Agnostic. O, verily, my brethren, are you not the old original Pharisees, and does not

the parable of the cup and platter apply closely to you!

Now, I want it to be clearly understood that I am not thinking of the English colonies in such centres of pleasure as Rome and Florence, which are, to a certain section of English people, a kind of Italian Boulogne, where, amid highly-respectable English and American residents, reside people whose antecedents, as well as present mode of life, are decidedly of the character euphemistically known as ‘shady.’ I am thinking of the English colonies in such commercial centres as Leghorn, Genoa, Milan, or Turin, where the mere pleasure-seeker does not fix his permanent abode. What is it that makes these Englishmen thus lose their native sense of morality? And is it perhaps a dim consciousness that he can lose it so easily, that, opportunity given, he is so ready to kick the traces, that makes him cling to it so closely, so almost aggressively, at home? I leave the problem to ethnographical philosophers for solution. It is my province here merely to deal with facts, and curious facts they are, and of a kind that should *donner à penser*. Another strange thing is that the English, so particular at home to avoid anything approaching to the nature of direct speech, have learnt from the Italians their naïve outspokenness about many natural things not usually breathed of in society; but here again, while aping, they have exaggerated, and one may hear from lips English things that cause even an Italian to start and blush, for, though outspoken, their manner is more veiled and their language less drastic and uncompromising than ours.

While in England there are so many among the cultured who love Italy as a second home,

strangely enough we find little or nothing of this sentiment among the Anglo-Italians to whom it is ever a land of exile. They care not for its politics, except in so far as these affect their business; they do not even try to take part in municipal actions; they will tell you with the greatest *sang-froid* that there is no such thing as a modern Italian literature, that there are no living Italian painters or sculptors worthy the name; in short, they are as ignorant of the life 'seething around them as if they lived in the Antipodes. And to crown all, they are proud rather than otherwise of this ignorance. Is not this perverted patriotism? is not this calculated rather to bring the English name into discredit, and to cause us to be regarded as yet more narrow-visioned, insular, and self-satisfied than we truly are? The Englishman living abroad undertakes a moral responsibility *vis-à-vis* his native land. Does our typical Anglo-Italian fulfil it to the best of his capacities? We doubt it. But on the other hand, his goodwill must not be impugned. He is the best-hearted, best-intentioned of men; but unhappily he is very terribly insular, very narrow visioned, handicapped by centuries of traditional dislike of all that is foreign in general, and what is Italian in particular. An Italian to his mind is ever double-motived, false, subtle, diabolically ingenious in the arts of deceit; incapable of pure and simple feelings, of truthfulness, of virtue. And is this the truth? We will now take a peep at the Italians among whom the lines of our Englishman are cast. But before doing so we will premise that there is a vast divergence of nature and character between the Italian of the north and centre and of the south—between, in a

word, the Italian more remotely emancipated from foreign oppression and those who have suffered so cruelly from the yoke of Bourbon and Pope. It is of the north and centre Italians that I propose to speak. Meanwhile I should just like to record my belief that many a tourist through Italy, hard pressed concerning the people among whom he has passed his days, would end by confessing that to him they were nothing but the *staffage* to a lovely landscape, the *décors d'opéra*, the inevitable element that gives animation to surroundings.

LETTER II.

WE travellers through the land of Italy are far too apt to judge of its peoples from the professional harpies with whom alone, as a rule, we come in contact—hotel-keepers, cabmen, *valets-de-place*, *e tutti quanti*, a brood alike all the world over. From these, and from the conventional Italian of the opera—a Don Juan or a brigand—most of our notions are drawn. How should we feel if foreigners judged of us only from the worst specimens of our East-Enders? You laugh at the bare idea, and yet I assure you that this is what most of us do with regard to the Italians. Now, what strikes me specially about the Italians, after some little study of the better classes, is, as a first and leading quality, their simple, almost childlike, direct goodness of character, the utter absence of what, with a misapprehension of the great Florentine's work, is called Machiavellism. The first instinct of feeling with an Italian is a kindly one; with southern impulsiveness, he meets you more than half-way, and gives you

credit for feeling as pleasantly to him as he feels towards you. I am not speaking now of the durability of this feeling. We have been told *ad nauseam* that it is the north that is dark, true, and tender; that the south is bright, fierce, and fickle; axioms which, like most conventional axioms, contain a certain element of truth, and a large element of too sweeping and therefore false generalisation. For the moment the Italian's feelings towards you are perfectly sincere, and whether he remember you twenty years hence or no is really of no special importance at the moment as compared to the instant social pleasantness wrought by this quality. And, on the other hand, he is not a false or forgetful friend. We are too serious as a nation. Before we smile on our fellow-men, before we give them even our finger-tips to press, we weigh and examine them in a mental balance, striving to make sure whether this be a person whom we should like as a friend for life. And if our decision is adverse, we keep aloof from him. Not so the Italian. He takes life less seriously and tragically; he lives more *au jour le jour*; let us be pleasant to one another; let us enjoy ourselves in this very present time, untroubled by the thought of a future that may never dawn, is his far more philosophical mode of viewing life. With us amiability is too apt to be regarded as the synonym of insincerity. The Italian cultivates amiability, is taught to do so from his cradle; to have regard for the feelings of others, and to strive to make matters as pleasant to those about him as he can. He is not necessarily insincere because he does not blurt out remarks concerning your personal character more true than flatter-

ing; but, avoiding this, speaks rather of the good qualities you also possess. It is rather that he seeks for these good points from an amiable kindness of feeling, quite as sincere and true as your often-misplaced endeavours to reform your neighbours by that unpleasant process known as 'speaking out like a friend.' One of the great complaints Italians make against the English is that the English are constantly treading upon their moral toes; that politeness is not cultivated among them as a virtue. And the Italians are a very sensitive people, easily hurt, quickly offended. Yet the good-hearted but obtuse Englishman stamps them down under his broad feet, quite unconscious how he is wounding his victim, because this victim has the fortitude to smile under the operation. One of our favourite modes of torturing these people is by abusing their native land, and crying up our own in comparison. Pressed on the subject of this want of breeding, the Englishman often naively replies that he did not think he could pay his auditor a greater compliment than in speaking to him as though he were a cosmopolitan, raised above all petty national feelings. Now, the Italian is anything but a cosmopolitan, nor does he—very rightly—strive to become one. He is ardently devoted to a land of which, for its traditions, its beauty, its talent, he may well be proud; but, on the other hand, he is sensitively aware that all is not yet as it should be within his house, and that there is still much that needs putting into order. But can we have no patience, no consideration? he thinks, though he is too polite to us, or too hurt by our speeches, to say so. Can we not remember that the Italy of to-day is but

thirteen years old, and that it is unfair to compare her with our policy of three hundred years of undisturbed internal history! Can we never be brought to do justice to what the Italian has already achieved in that short space, instead of ever harping upon that which he still has to do? No wonder the Italians care so little about associating with us, who in social intercourse with them have a very talent for vexing their souls. In yet another respect we constantly rub up our genial hosts the wrong way, and that is in neglecting the little social forms to which they attach much importance. It is yet another of those fallacious commonplaces that we are a stiff and ceremonious people, and that the Italians are the reverse. Now, this is absolutely incorrect; more expansive, more *avenante* in society than we, the Italian at the same time attaches a very great importance to social forms, and to neglect these is a far more serious matter than with us. We may think these forms puerile; indeed, with our considerate outspokenness, we constantly inform the Italians that we do so think them; but they are the manners and customs of the people among whom we have deliberately chosen permanently or momentarily to pitch our tents, and we are bound to respect them rather more than we do. And most of these customs, when investigated, will be found to rest upon the exquisite regard for the feelings of others which never deserts an Italian, of no matter what class. Fine social tact might be almost said to be the national virtue, so widely is it diffused among high and low. Indeed, tact and refinement of feeling among the lower classes is quite a salient national feature, and these lower classes we are

constantly wounding by our manner of approach. We come to the country prepared to find them all thieves and brigands, and treat them as such. Conceive whether they love us, whether the figure of an Englishman calls up pleasant ideas to their minds. We think ourselves gentlemen, they think us bores, and I am not sure but what they are often right and we wrong. Mind, they respect us highly as a nation; they desire above all things to emulate our system of government, our freedom, our integrity, but they do not love us. Love and respect do not always go hand in hand.

Another point on which we do grave injustice to the Italians is regarding their domestic lives. Here again our ideas are wholly derived from plays and novels; and we have not the faintest notion of how domestic, how home-loving is the Italian of the middle and lower class. The upper class, like the upper classes all the world over, with their made marriages, their wealth, their *désœuvrement*, are morally lax, and, as a rule, lead anything but domestic lives. But tender family feeling, warm affection, self-sacrifice, and devotion are even more commonly found than among ourselves. It is a far greater wrench than with us for families to be separated—thus the departure of a son for the New World is regarded as a very calamity—and the link of family feeling is never allowed to be broken on either side: and for their devotion to their young children there is nothing to be compared to an Italian. Baby-worship is a very cultus among all classes; and while with us the charge of at least the young children is wholly left to the mother, in Italy both father and mother share the happy burden, and it is the father as often as the mother who will rise

at night and dandle the restless babe, prepare for it its food, or sing it to sleep with lullabies.

They are a prolific people. To be childless is regarded as an intense calamity; and no matter how shallow the purse, no new-comer is welcomed other than with smiles and gladness. Now, is it possible that a people so home-loving, so affectionate, so fond of offspring, should be so depraved, so immoral, as we habitually depict them? We have too long looked upon one side only of the Italian character; it is high time that we learnt to know the other. Another favourite idea of ours is that the Italians never make love marriages. No doubt their marriages, like those of the French, are often arranged by the parents; but, unlike those of the French, as a rule a veto of choice is left to the young people; and if we could collect statistics upon the point, I am inclined to think that we should find that the proportion of these marriages, founded upon a groundwork of reason and social compatibility, which turn out well is as great as, if not greater than, that of our marriages founded on youthful caprice and unreason. I do not pretend that there is not some truth in the charge of moral laxity so frequently made against the Italians; but—your hand upon your heart, my friend—are we so absolutely free from this vice ourselves that we can afford to throw stones at our neighbours? Do not our great cities maintain as large a class of certain unfortunates as those of any Continental town? My deliberate belief is that the difference between us is that of six and half a dozen, and that the cause of our exaggerated ideas springs solely from the greater outspokenness of the Italians, who reveal what we conceal—nothing

more, nothing less. We at home, at least, are ashamed of what we do; the Italian thinks it a pity, perhaps; but what would you? It is human nature; and if *Iddio* had not meant us to yield to that, He should have made us differently. *Che volete!* And an Italian is no less jealous of the honour and virtue of his wife and daughters than we are. Witness to this are the duels that are daily fought in every Italian city on these accounts.

Within my limits it is difficult to know about what features of the Italian character to speak most; but, being limited, I am inclined to speak most about those concerning which it is my conviction, founded upon experience, that most errors circulate. Now, another of our *idées fixe* is that the Italian is hot and impetuous, and has no philosophy in his character. So wide is this of the mark that, even among the more fiery and impatient Neapolitans, philosophy constitutes a powerful element in the substratum of character; while among the northern and central Italians it is an element on which we cannot count too strongly. *Cosa vuole; abbia pazienza*, are words not only constantly upon their lips, but consistently carried out in their lives. An Italian bows his head with resignation to the inevitable; with resignation, but not with indifference. Here lies the essential point. He has ever present before his eyes the brevity of existence; why, then, make such ado about trifles? Hence he is *au fond* far calmer, far less excitable than we are. This astonishes you: this does not square with your conventional ideas of an Italian: and yet it is so. Also, we are fond of thinking, because the Italian is light-hearted and gay, that he is not also serious. We

are such a one-sided people, we cannot make allowance for versatility. The Italians hide under a light exterior much real gravity, much tenacity of purpose; and it is quite ludicrous at times how we, the matter-of-fact English, fail to take into account their matter-of-factness. While traditionally receptive to all artistic and sensuous impressions, the Italian of to-day, like his old Roman ancestor of yore, is preëminently practical and positive. Excitements, such as are got up among us to alter the course of a railway, to deprive a city of salutary water because the æsthetic or sentimental feelings of a handful of persons are outraged, are wholly unknown to him. The prosperity and progress of the many is his motto; and while from instinct he never can be so brutally ugly and iconoclastic as his English brother, he will not, on the other hand, let sentiment check the advance of civilisation or material prosperity. He does not desire to live merely upon what he can extract from tourists out of his noble past; he desires, above all, that the present should be noble—noble after the mode of the nineteenth century, whose ideals are, to his eyes, in their way, as good as, if not better than, those of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, about which

the *forestieri* rave. And this is why he resents that we will only regard the Italians of the past, and have nothing but supercilious contempt for the Italians of to-day. He knows he is striving to do his utmost to the limits of his powers; he has, above all other nations, set ours before him as the model he desires to copy; and it is just we who neglect him most, treat him with the most indifference, calumniate him, pervert his motives, are unjust to his aims.

If the few lines that I have penned will cause my countrymen, on their future visits, to pay a little more attention to the people as well as to the land amid which they find themselves; if, for the sake of international equity and amity, they will be more genial and approachable to their hosts, so that each may judge the other more fairly; in a word, if they will leave behind them their preconceived notions of Italians and try to see them as they really are, my words will not have been written in vain, and I may hope to have sown good seed that may bring forth fruit a hundredfold in the form of international peace on earth, goodwill to men. I love Italy and I love England, and it pains me to see each misapprehend the other.

ON THE NILGHIRIS.

I.

'THE hills they call Neilgherries,
Where they grow the coffee-berries;
And the climate's something just
Between the torrid and the cold.'

It is an outline sketch of these attractive mountains we wish to picture. Aliph Cheem, in his *Lays of Ind*, spells their name as we have quoted it above; but the more correct and accepted orthography is *Nilghiris*—*nil*, blue, and *ghirri*, a hill, being the Hindustani derivative. And a happy one it is, for their slopes and ridges are generally deep-tinted blue by the flowers of a species of lutea growing thickly upon them, and stand out boldly in that colour against the clear and cloudless sky.

Whereabouts in the vast continent of India are these Blue Mountains? Every one knows that they are situated in the Coimbatore district of the Madras Presidency; that they rise abruptly from its plains in a direction from north-west to south-east; and that their highest peak attains the respectable altitude of upwards of nine thousand feet above sea-level. Singularly deficient in wood clothing, their plateaux are seen to be; although in their gorges, ravines, and on their sides, either *sholas* (*Anglicè*, copses) or dense impenetrable forests of timber exist. And in saying that the geological features of the whole chain consist in strata of granite, with horn-blende and 'trap' rock intersecting them; that here and there are scanty veins of iron and copper ore; and that decomposed felspar (kaolin) is literally to the

fore, and is as literally neglected for earthenware fabric, we have given as brief a description, generally and physically, as our sketch requires. With an atmosphere thin, fresh, and invigorating; in which the mercury in the shade seldom falls below thirty-six degrees, nor rises above seventy-eight degrees; in a climate where vigorous exercise can be enjoyed, and where locomotion is not the bane of existence; where the everlasting punka and almost as constant *cus-cus tatties* (scented grass-screens wetted) are banished into the limbo of things forgotten; where many fruits and most vegetables of European growth can be raised to perfection, and flowers bloom in luxuriant beauty; where the suddenly seized and slaughtered sheep or fowl may bide awhile in the larder ere he be dressed and eaten; and where life and health freshen and respring—no wonder that the Anglo-Indian, whose calling compels him to reside on the plains, is constantly repeating to himself, metaphorically at least, those words of Mrs. Browning:

'Hills draw like heaven,
And sometimes stronger; holding out their
hands,
To pull us from the vile flats up to them.'

In present days of railways ramifying over Bengal, Bombay, and the Benighted Presidency—as now and again we still hear Madras named—it is an easy matter enough to reach the elysium we have just slightly pictured from the gehenna of the 'vile flats.' Twenty-four hours or so from the capital of the said Benighted Pre-

sidency, or a short three days' run from the empire city Bombay, will land you, by rail and by road, upon its heights. The Bombay route is by far the more interesting, for by it you ascend the wonderfully engineered steep gradients of the 'Bhore Incline,' get one or two glances at the grand scenery of the Western Ghâts, halt at the large and much craved after military station of Poona, traverse a good section of the Nizam's territory in the Deccan, come athwart his matchlock and tulwar-armed subjects—whose heads and jaws are always bound up in cloth or silk, as if neuralgia or chronic toothache were their permanent lot in life—and cross the mighty Kistna and Tongooboodra rivers. Then presently the Great Indian Peninsular line of rail by which you are travelling joins the Madras railway proper; and for the rest of your way the journey is tame, flat, and unprofitable, save, if a stranger in a strange land, you choose to speculate upon the ways and means of getting grain crops out of fields of hard sun-baked mud or red dust, upon the extent of meat overlaying those skeletons of horned cattle and goat-looking sheep, upon the cost to pater-familias of the infinitesimal scrap of raiment his younger children wear, or upon the use and abuse of those many temples about with effigies of 'suamies' (gods) displayed in their compounds (yards), and with fat priests and naughty nautch-girls of unquestionable ugliness lurking about the premises.

The Madras railroad bisects the entire breadth of the Carnatic, from Madras on the eastern shore to the small port of Beypore on the west, and is of the considerable length of four hundred miles. But your destination being Nilghiriwards, you will have to stop

short of the western terminus by about one hundred miles, and, at a station called Poothanoor, make a divergence from the trunk-line into a branch one, which, running some twenty odd miles over level country, ends at the small, well-to-do, but fever-haunted native village and bazaar of Metapollium. There, willy-nilly, you must wish the iron horse adieu, and have recourse to that stereotyped way of travelling, in vogue when dear old dead-and-gone John Company ruled the land, 'the dawd,' to wit.

Now, the dawd on this road may be from its Alpha of a carriage and pair of horses, down to its Omega, a country-built springless cart, drawn by a couple of tough-hide fleshless bullocks; intermediate means of progression being a palanquin—or in Indo vernacular, a *palkee*—a tonjon (sedan-chair), monshiel (hammock slung on a pole), an armchair covered with a palm-leaf hood, a riding-horse or pony. 'You pays your money—to a well-known carrying company—and you takes your choice.' But whatever it may be that you elect and pay for, you adopt it at Metapollium, where, as just now mentioned, rail plant ends and the carrying company's 'plant' begins. First, the said plant, vehicular or otherwise, takes you over the picturesque Bowhany river, a rapid rocky stream, in which the mah-seer, the Indian salmon, may be hooked, the cunning hand directing rod and line. It is a good fish, and, delicately dealt with, a dainty dish to set before a king; but, under the coarse treatment of him whose generic name is a 'coolie cook,' no *vala nada*, as the Spaniards have it. Five miles from this torrent, over a roadway luxuriant with noble trees and evergreen shrubs, and brightened

on either side by tropical wild flowers, the insignificant hamlet of Kullar is reached, and there the level abruptly ends and the ghât or mountain pass as abruptly commences. It is a very peculiar feature of these Nilghiri hills that all their upleads, except one which abuts upon the table-lands of Mysore, rise suddenly and, so to speak, without warning from the levels, and within a few paces almost of a dead flat a steep acclivity will begin. Such is the case here; and if wheel conveyance has been utilised thus far, it had better be now abandoned, and man or beast transport resorted to. The latter takes the shape of animals, facetiously called by their hirers 'horses' and *tats* (country-bred ponies), and as facetiously are said to belong to the age they work in; but at a glance you recognise them to be but fossil remains of their equine race, so spare, so very spare are they in muscular and adipose tissue, so great, so wonderfully great in osseous and hard tendinous developments. Nevertheless, as examples of what vivified skeletons can do, these ghosts of their former selves will take you slowly and tolerably safely up a steep incline, which in the short distance of nine miles rises no less than six thousand feet from the base of the mountains at Kullar. The other, or bipedal, transits are the tonjons and contrivances alluded to, and which are borne by gangs of 'bearers,' tardy in pace and noisy of mouth, particularly noisy if they get a shrewd suspicion that the sympathy of their human load is being excited by the idea that his or her weight is a tax above their strength to carry. Stories, not unfounded either, go that stout gentlemen of warm and tender hearts have been so worked upon by the 'Hi! ho!

ho! my! wah! ah!' and suchlike plaintive-sounding but habitual sing-song wail of the gentle and mild overworked Hindoo nigger, that, though 'stout and scant of breath,' they have got out of their conveyances and walked. Whereby the mild and gentle Hindoo has whispered his neighbour, 'Ah-bah! what an old fool the Feringhee saab is!'

The New Coonoor Ghât or Pass, the one we intend you to climb—there is an old one, longer and not so good—zigzags the face of the mountains, skirts their edges over the brinks of deep perpendicular precipices, defiles through narrow gorges, overhung with huge granite rocks, and thick with hoary lichen-covered forest trees, crosses rivulets and larger water-sheds, and—when a rare gap or opening is reached, and you turn to take a look at what you have passed over—presents to your gaze a scene almost unmatched in wild beauty around; while below, the fruitful valleys of Coimbatore, with the aforesaid Bowhany river meandering among them like a silver cord, meet your eye. And mark, as you still ascend, that at a wider break on the left there stands the famed Hullikul Droog—Tippoo Sahib's Tarpeian rock, off which he hurled his victims into the abyss and torrent below. It is a grand majestic craggy spur, this Droog, densely wooded to its very summit, save here and there where patches and pinnacles of the bare rock start up, or where the light yellow-stem, feathery-leaf bamboo takes the place of larger timber. Mark the spot well, paint it on memory's page, for it is the very tit-bit of all the tit-bits of the prospect on the Coonoor Ghât.

And now the air is moist, chilly, and misty; ferns—some of rare beauty—rhododendrons, and orchids take the place of the vege-

tation of the 'vile flats,' and the whole character of the scene you quitted but an hour or so ago is metamorphosed. And still the metamorphosis goes on, until, having passed through the hamlet of Burliar, where the Government has established a tropico-temperate garden, and skirted some rich thriving plantations, 'where they grow the coffee-berries,' you arrive at Coonoor, the first of the stations on the Nilghiris, and which we must pause to sketch.

At an elevation of six thousand feet above the sea, and upon the available slopes and plateaux of the undulating mountains, this healthful and charming spot stands. A stream—hardly a river—flowing through a gorge, divides it into two unequal sides, on both of which English-looking houses and cottages are built. Most of these are *pucka*—that is to say, constructed with material sufficiently durable to withstand the heavy rainfalls and violent gales of the monsoons: *cutch*, or less permanent fabrics, would 'thaw and resolve themselves into a dew,' under the wear and tear of wind and water. As a rule, a garden environs the houses, and in them may be seen the flowers and the vegetables of 'home' flourishing luxuriantly. Fruit-trees also are not quite wanting—indeed, the peach is general enough, though small in size and harsh in flavour; and at 'Gray's,' an hotel perched on a rise at the southern aspect of the station, there is an orchard where the fruits of the tropics are side by side with those of temperate zones—apples, pears, plums, peaches, strawberries, being companions with oranges, shaddocks, limes, lemons, citrons, loquats, bananas, and others. But the most conspicuous, as well as the most picturesque, feature of Coonoor is its church. Standing

within a well-tended flower and shrub planted cemetery, entered by a massive granite gateway, over the arches of which

'The wild rose and the woodbine entwined,
And the sweet-scented jasmine waves in
wind,'

and backed with fir and cypress trees, no prettier English-like God's house, or God's acre, in all India, where, as a fact, graveyards and burial-places of all sorts are the last portions of a cantonment looked after. There are no public buildings of any kind in the station we are touching upon; and, indeed, beyond its climate and its scenic attractions, there is a delightful *dolce far niente* languor and do-nothingness in everything around, mammas and their sickly 'washed-out' children being its chief occupants.

Coonoor is what is called a second-class civil sanatorium, second-class implying that no swells of collectors, or commissioners, or judges are in office there; and civil, that it is deficient in locating anything more military than some native pioneers for work on its roads and ghâts. But 'sound the trumpets, beat the drums,' that attractive element of Indian life is not far off. Within a couple of miles—at Wellington—some three or four hundred soldiers, of all arms, are in force—nay, hardly *in force*; for the place is the convalescent dépôt, and the troops the sick and weakly of the Madras Presidency.

II.

To get to Wellington, or, as the natives call it, Jackatalla, you must descend the slopes of Coonoor, and ascend the opposite ones of the place you are in search of, or wending your way either through precipitous footpaths cut

among tangles of wild guava, berries, and other thick undergrowth; or—easier though longer—by a good winding carriage-road, skirting the faces of the hills, and crossing a noisy stream rushing to join the Bowhany river. By what name the aborigines of these hills call this rivulet we forget, if, indeed, we ever knew; but a mighty governor of the Madras Presidency, whose idiosyncrasy it was to Anglicise everything come-atable, dubbed it the Waterloo river, as he had dubbed Jackatalla Wellington. Space will not permit of our saying very much anent this charming cantonment, so health-renewing to the debilitated and unacclimatised European soldier, the habitat of whose regiment is the 'low country;' but unfortunately, for specific medical reasons, one-half the ills which Thomas Atkins is heir to in India cannot be benefited by removal to this sanatorium. It is unnecessary to say why and wherefore, but so it is; and every medical officer has the code of 'vetos' in his possession, and is told how to dispose of those cases which the Nilghiris suit not.

Wellington, or Jackatalla—take which name suits your fancy best—stands at much the same elevation as Coonoor, say 6100 feet above the sea; its aspect, however, is more sheltered from strong winds; good gravelled roads intersect it everywhere; undergrowth has been completely cleared away; eucalypti and other trees of fine growth have been planted in all directions; pure water has been led from springs for its supply; and last, though not least, palatially imposing and commodious barracks, with every modern desideratum, have been built at a cost simply ruinous, so expensive is material—*pukka* material—on the Nilghiris. Barring a very

few natives, who cultivate slips of ground with grain and vegetables, and who keep shops of an inferior olla-podrida kind in the bazaar; bar the all-over-Madras-known Mr. Framjee of that (Wellington) ilk; and bar a planter or two of European or Euro-Asiatic descent engaged in the highly profitable occupation of tea-growing and curing, the population of the convalescent dépôt is of the sons of Mars only—sons of Mars of the artillery, cavalry, infantry, all jumbled up, so to speak, in a heterogeneous mass, and all present, not for the pride, pomp, and circumstance of war, but to test climatorial effects; and, failing good results, to be invalided to England. As a rule, the men dislike the place; they care not for the calm, quiet, humdrum monotony of their surroundings. 'L'amour, le vin et le tabac,' as the sergeant in *Le Châlet* tells us (in song) are the needs of a soldier, are in two out of the three requisites difficult to arrive at here; and the amusements, physical and intellectual, which are liberally provided, are either altogether shirked or 'come tardy off.' But as Thomas Atkins longs for rejoining his corps, and retasting 'sentry go,' and so on, so Thomas Atkins's officers do all that they can, and bring all interest to bear, not only to be attached to the convalescent dépôt, but to remain as long as they can in its *cari luoghi*. But, with the exception of a certain staff, which is part and parcel of the establishment for two years, no 'general-duty cove's' period of stay extends beyond a short twelve calendar months in these quarters.

Ten miles from Wellington, and nearly fifteen hundred feet above it, is Ootacamund, the capital of the Nilghiris. An excellent road—practicable for wheel-carriages of

all kinds, from the London-built drag down to the rough and ready village-made 'hackery' (cart)—conducts to it; but, in comparison with the Coonoor Ghât, the route is tame, dull, and wanting in constant romantic scenery. Yet there are one or two spots worth halting at, and enjoying; for instance, the views of the Arunghavaut and Katie valleys—so well tilled by the Burgher and Kother hill tribes—and at that sharp bend where, standing upon the very brink of the cud, you command an overlook of a wooded enclosure, nestled in the corner of a rich fruitful vale, where a house of some pretension stands, erst the up-country seat of a Madras governor, now the head-quarters of the Moravian mission.

Arrived at the apex of the mountain-road, a descent has to be made, for Ootacamund—or, to call it by its briefer name, 'Ooty'—lies in a basin between surrounding hills, overtopped by Dodabetta, the highest peak of the Blue Mountains, 8800 feet above the sea, 1600 feet over the town itself. In a sketch such as we are giving it would be impossible to delineate, with anything like accuracy, the features of this place, so varied are they in mountains, uplands, knolls, slopes, flats, patches of wood, bare scrubs, morass, and even in a large sheet of water forming an artificial lake. A very much better idea can be gained by a glance at any of the many photographic views existing, notably so those from the lenses of those celebrated Indian artists, Messrs. Shepherd & Bourne.

You are now, friend reader, about 7000 feet up in the clouds, *in nubibus*, as S. of 'Ours'—a better soldier than a Latinist—used to say. You are in a climate

colder, wetter, more rarefied, more boisterous than either of the two stations already imperfectly limned, but yet bracing and health-giving in the extreme. The thermometer at early mornings in the months of December and January you will not unfrequently find a degree or two below freezing-point, the rainfall averaging forty-five inches, and the stormy winds blowing with a vengeance at the setting in of the periodical monsoons. A very much more important and intensely 'swell' place, too, are you in than quiet Coonoor and military Jackatalla; a station with a commissioner and his civil staff, with finance and judicial functionaries; a station with its churches and chapels, its club, its gaol, its hospital, its library and reading-room—the latter the daily resort of a few reading men and ladies, but of more, many more, idlers: loquacious dames and gossiping cavaliers attending them, gentlemen 'whose only books'—here, at all events—'are women's looks.' Then there are rooms available for your many entertainments—for the concerts, theatricals, lectures, dances, constantly going on; a large field for your cricket, lawn-tennis, archery, football, what not; and a market, where generally, but once a week certainly—'shandy' day they call it—produce of every kind grown or reared on these hills may be bought by you, and your servants may, and do, consume much alcoholic liquor.

Ooty possesses bazaars, in which are shops kept by Mahometan tradesmen chiefly, Hussains and Abboos, Abduls, Ghools, and such-like by name—emporiums where the lowest recognised coin is the rupee, and where my lady's dainty finery nestles alongside of iron pots and pans, and broadcloth and silk hosiery rest upon tins of

Crosse & Blackwell's meats and jams, Huntley & Palmer's biscuits, and Colman's mustard. Tradition has it that once upon a time a ship's anchor and a pair of ice-skates were found buried in dust in one of these dealing-in-everything warehouses. Still further, the chief town of the Nilghiris rejoices in hotels, which might be cheaper; and is happy in having unrivalled Government gardens, rich, over-rich, in flowers, plants, shrubs, ferns, orchids from almost all parts of the world, and, above all, in its extensive plantations of cinchona, ready to yield its febrifuge alkaloid. Lastly, its more than a league from 'Charing Cross,' a central position of the place, we find the stately Lawrence Asylum, sheltering and instructing the orphan children of soldiers who have died in the Presidency.

To see Ooty in full feather, March, April, and May, the hot months of the 'vile flats,' is the time. It is then full. Every one, from the Governor and Commander-in-Chief downwards; every one to whom 'privilege leave,' leisure, and rupees are come-atable; every matron, maid, and grass widow, who has been successful in screwing the funds out of hubby, paterfamilias, or other male relative's purse, are 'all there,' to use the masher's slang, and the indiarubber-like elasticity of its accommodation is sorely tried thereby. No seaside lodging-house in the height of the season comes up to it. At other periods, when the nomadic visitors have departed homewards, and the permanent residents and officials alone remain, house-room is attainable enough; the gay, festive, dressy—for, indeed, it is dressy—over-excited cantonment subsides into a very dull, one-day-telleth-another's state of things;

old clothes are again brought to light; you can read, write, or sleep if you like in the reading-room; the harvest of the shopkeepers is over, and shandy, too, is but the ghost of its other self. But these residents—the 'Todas' is their sobriquet, after the native aborigines of the Nilghiris—will assure you that the 'off months' are by far the most agreeable; that the extremes of hot and cold—for sol is hot, very hot, at mid-day here, elevation notwithstanding—are not so great; that one may ride or drive along the roads, or around the lake, without meeting the gushing grass widow *magna comitante caterva* of admirers in her train; may escape, without a miracle, a spill over the cuds, or a dive into the deep dark waters; and—let us whisper it—that the blooming Toda maidens may not be so liable to be 'cut out' by their more fashionable and attractive sisterhood of Madras, Bangalore, or Bombay or Bengal cities.

We have twice mentioned 'Toda' as the bantering nickname of the European *habitués* of Ootacamund, but a few words about the race itself, of which so little is known, will not be out of place. Aliph Cheem, in his *Lays of Ind*, before quoted, has described it, if even humorously, yet most graphically, and we shall interpolate our description with some lines of his 'pome.'

It is a purely pastoral tribe, this Toda one, untraceable in descent, but claiming to be the aboriginal of the Nilghiris. Its men follow neither agricultural nor other industrial pursuits, their sole line of life being the care of their buffaloes, which they highly regard, may venerate—live upon their milk and that only. They never slaughter the beasts, except as a sacrifice to the shades of their

dead, and then with over-many forms and ceremonials. Tall, well-made, active fellows are they, 'yellow-coloured in the face,' with long bushy hair and beards, which from earliest growth to death never knows a cutting instrument.

'Their women are enormous ;
And as they themselves inform us,
Are in matrimonial matters
Quite the wonder of the sex.
Polyandrist is each lady ;'

and being so, it goes without saying that she manages to rule the roast at home. And in regard to this home, our facetious poet cleverly and correctly pictures them after this fashion :

'Their secluded habitations
Are but simple excavations,
With a cover like a kennel,
Or the section of a tub ;'

and in regard to dress,

'Their apparel very odd is—
Just a blanket on their bodies,'

which envelopment seldom or never is dipped into a running stream, or subjected to the action of country-made soap. Besides their dwelling hovels, there exists in each 'mund'—for so their villages are called—one hut, or rather hole, set apart for the worship of the 'Great Spirit,' to whom they pour out libations of milk ; and they generally select for this religious hovel the most out-of-the-way corner of the 'mund,' which, as a rule, is situated in a picturesque nook, enclosed with a strong fence for the safety of the cattle. Nowadays but few of these 'munds' are to be found, scattered at considerable distances apart, upon these Blue Hills. All are very thinly populated, as may well be imagined from the domestic habits of the people, who indeed, as a race, must soon be extinct. There is no difficulty in getting admission into any one of the Toda villages ; a rupee of the

land will 'open sesame,' but be assured the return is not worth the outlay. They are peculiarly offensive : *verb. sat.*

Besides this 'race of niggers,' there are other tribes, but in no large numbers, domiciled on the Nilghiris—Burghers, Curumbers, Kothers, the latter pariahs of the lowest caste, or rather outcast. These are the farmers of the land, raising easily from its rich, dark, peaty soil many sorts of indigenous grain, others of foreign origin, to say nothing of roots and tubers, the potato amongst them. But even up to the present moment, though the high fertility of these hills has been fully recognised, their value as a field of paying industry has been but scantily developed. There is hardly a cereal, root, tuber, or grass which could not be sown and reaped a hundredfold from the slopes, plateaux, and vales, now covered with rank and coarse vegetation. Coffee, it has been said, is flourishing at suitable elevations (the Ochterlony valley towards the Mysore country is one vast and lovely plantation of this berry), and tea is fast becoming a very remunerative article of commerce ; so is cinchona, which is being multiplied as much as possible.

Not many animals or birds inhabit the Blue Mountains. The sambar (elk), spotted deer, jungle sheep, and antelope are sometimes found in the sholas ; now and again a cheetah, a hyena, or even a tiger wanders about 'cattle-lifting,' and generally meets his end from the rifle of 'the old Shikaree' (hunter), by which name a worthy resident at Ooty is known. Jackals are common, but 'cute,' and are systematically hunted by a pack of foxhounds, which have their meets about Madras in the cold weather, and in the hot season come up, like

their M.H. 'whips' and hunters, to Ooty for health and recreation. Hares are fairly common, so also is the fretful porcupine, who, if he finds his way into your kitchen-garden, will play havoc with your pet vegetables. He is accounted delicate eating, this 'spine pig,' as the natives call him; as why should he not be, having delicately fed upon yours or any other man's beet, marrows, peas, beans, and cucumbers? Snipe and jungle-fowl, an erratic woodcock or two, the common Indian partridge and quail may be often shot; but the two last-named birds are not worth the firewood and ghee (clarified butter) with which they are cooked. Florican, the game-bird

par excellence of India, may sometimes be stumbled upon; but 'when found, make a note of it,' and have him scientifically dressed by a *cordons bleu*, and not by a before-mentioned coolie cook.

And now, in saying that there are other and lovely spots in addition to those we have chatted about—Kotagherry, Pycara, the Avalanche, Neddiwattum being some of them—that many a retired officer has pitched his tent permanently upon the Blue Hills instead of returning to England, and that coffee-pulpers, bee-hives, butter-churns, cheese-presses are now his daily solitudes, our very imperfect story of the Nilghiris finishes.

H. L. COWEN.

MADAME FAVART.

A Chapter from French Historiois Story.

By what chance comes it that a vulgar little woman, who was neither beautiful, virtuous, nor talented to any extraordinary extent, has been remembered so well by posterity, personated on the stage, talked about, written about, set to music and sung about ever since her death in the year 1783? To that question there is, I believe, but one reply. She was made famous by that which made famous, or infamous, many another grandly dishonoured woman: she was a great man's mistress. Her name was Madame Favart; and the great man whose fame she shares and spoils was the tallest, strongest, handsomest, and bravest soldier of his time, Count Maurice of Saxony, Marshal Saxe.

The Marshal's father was a monarch whose chief delights were in sensual and profligate pleasures: Frederick Augustus—surnamed 'The Strong'—King of Poland. His mother was of a race famous for their physical beauty, warlike character, and the wild impetuosity of their passions; and her illegitimate son Maurice was equally true to the instincts of his father's race and that of his mother, the Countess of Königsmark.

Maurice began his warlike career in his twelfth year, and astonished every one by his daring, his fearlessness, and his patient endurance of a soldier's hardships. With a light heart he faced—nay, sought—the deadliest peril, regarding hairbreadth escapes as

the best of good jokes, and the smell of blood and gunpowder as perfume. As a boy, almost a child, he carried a heavy musket on his bruised and discoloured shoulder, and marched in the ranks afoot in mid-winter snow and frost. At the siege of Tournay, when he was in his thirteenth year, he escaped death by chances which appeared miraculous, and laughed at them. At the close of the bloody struggle of Malplaquet he spoke of the fight as one he had 'enjoyed.' At Stralsund, when he was sixteen, he swam a river in the face of the enemy's guns, holding his pistol aloft in one hand, and saw without shrinking three of the officers and twenty of the men who followed him shot down. At Gadebusch, the prodigies of valour he performed astonished the oldest men in the army.

He was but eighteen when he married the domesticated, rich, and beautiful Countess Victoria von Loben, who was in her sixteenth year; and when he had spent two hundred thousand thalers of her money in reckless pleasure, gambling, and immorality, against which she vainly protested, they were divorced. At parting she very earnestly advised him to remain single. 'A man,' said she, 'who loves many women ought never to marry one, especially,' she added tearfully, 'one who loves him; and in honesty and honour he can never marry any woman.' The Count agreed with her, and, saying 'a wife is use-

less to a soldier,' promised never to marry again.

In after years, when the Countess was happy in the arms of one who was a husband more true, and a more constant lover, the Marshal would sometimes think tenderly of her and sigh, envying his successor, especially when one or more of his petted and luxuriously-supported mistresses played against him the cards he had played against his wife. They were all more or less mercenary, these mistresses, except one—Adrienne Lecouvreur, who sold her plate and jewels to send him a large sum of money when he was in desperate need of it and far away from her, making love to other ladies, royal and otherwise. Her fate, too, has received dramatic treatment; and you may remember how touchingly Rachel placed her woes before us on the stage. Adrienne was a great actress, but not beautiful.

And this brings me to the fact that the Marshal was a patron of the stage in his way, and loved to be amongst the frail and fascinating actresses in the green-room, laughing and jesting, and toying and making love, and spending money in costly gifts, and thereby creating no little bad blood and jealousy. In those days adventures in gallantry were sought in the green-room, as warlike adventures were on the battle-field, and actresses acquired greater fame and eminence by their wit, vivacity, and immodesty off the stage than they did by the talent they displayed on it.

That was the fitting day in which short petticoats first began to flourish, and those prodigious leaps and bounds were invented which on the stage have ever since been called 'dancing.' The inventor of both was well known to the Marshal. She was Mademoi-

selle Carmango, 'known,' says Grimm, or Diderot, I forget which, 'by a thousand brilliant adventures behind the scenes.' She deserves to be remembered, I suppose, for her short petticoats have been religiously preserved and gradually shortened and re-shortened, until now they have been shortened out of existence by the latest of her shameless followers, whose springs and gymnastic feats are even more strikingly athletic than Carmango's were.*

Mademoiselle Carton, a very inartistic chorus-singer, with a weak shrill voice, 'acquired for herself,' says the Baron de Grimm, 'a distinguished name by her adventures in gallantry and her witticisms.' She was with Count Saxe in the great camp of Muhlberg, in Saxony, and there was introduced by her lover to sup with his disreputable father Augustus, and with Frederick William of Prussia, and the Princes. Another of his theatric lady-loves was Mdlle. Verrières, great-grandmother of George Sand. There were, however, a score of stage ladies who shared with Carton and Verrières the favours of the wild young Count, the hero of Fontenoy, the only general who could then lead French troops to victory. In the green-room it was the delight of the actors and actresses to crown the Count, whose frank heartiness and boyish smile won all hearts, with golden laurels in honour of the great conquests he had achieved for France.

* She divided Paris into two conflicting bodies—those who believed she had given stage-dancing its crowning glory, and those who thought she had disgraced and degraded it. The Sorbonne of the Opéra held a great many meetings before they could decide which of the two parties should be supported. Their final decision cannot be given, for it is hardly quotable in English.

While Marshal Saxe was achieving fame on the battle-field, Charles Simon Favart was winning it as a writer of musical farces and comedies, since called comic operas, for a body of wandering performers, who, with him, had been driven out of Paris by the jealousy of the French actors and royal persecution. At the Opéra aux Italiens they had been prosperous and dignified, but as strollers the lives they led were hard, toilsome, and precarious. In 1745, the year of famous Fontenoy, the remaining portion of the outcast Italian company was under the management of this Charles Favart, who was then a plain, little, ill-made man, in his thirty-fifth year, a poet of real ability, who had originally been a journeyman pastrycook. He had come into notice first as winner of the prize in the Jeux Floraux, for which he wrote his first poem, 'La France délivrée par la Pucelle d'Orléans;' and he had fallen in love with Mademoiselle Chantilly, a smart, clever, vivacious little actress, who played rustic parts, sang saucy songs, and danced vulgar dances, and was, it seems, of the type we are now familiar with in music-halls, pantomimes, and burlesques. She had a loud, shrill, somewhat unpleasant voice, and Baron de Grimm, although he always speaks of her as a 'celebrated actress,' said of her when she was old:

'I never remember her handsome. She had no talent for real comedy, and she ought to have quitted the stage long ago. It is true that of late years she has seldom performed, authors not having been desirous of seeing her put into any character of consequence to their pieces: she has an excellent talent at contributing to the damnation of a play. Her husband was the only person who

had the politeness, as bound by the laws of conjugal affection, to give her the first characters in his compositions, but this piece of pious attention had a great influence upon their success.' Such triumphs as Chantilly won can scarcely be expected to outlast youth.

But whatever her talent, or want of it, whether handsome, plain, or ugly, Chantilly had the knack of fascinating her male admirers. But she bestowed her favours upon one alone, her manager, the ex-pastrycook and poet, Favart. In the seventh heaven of pride and pleasure he wrote the comic operas in which she so joyously danced and sang, each dreaming fondly of the time when all Paris would flock to hear her sing his songs, when their cruel days of poverty and wandering would be past, and they would be married, wealthy, respected, and happy. Alas for their idle dream!

Amongst the camp-followers of those days one or more companies of itinerant actors were usually to be found, and Marshal Saxe, setting an example which Bonaparte afterwards followed, gave them special encouragement. They were useful because they could amuse the soldiers, who shared their plunder with them, make them forget their hardships and grievances, or inspire them on the eve of some great battle by glorifying patriotism and heroic deeds. In a fatal hour Favart determined to seek Marshal Saxe, and request his support and patronage, trusting that his patriotism and the poetry it inspired him to write would insure him a welcome of more than common warmth. His hopes were realised, unluckily. In 1746 we find him at Rancoux, on the eve of the great battle so called, composing verses for Chan-

tilly to sing between the acts of a new piece, and announcing the coming victory of French arms. Frenchmen, of course, never fought but to conquer. And on the evening before another great fight, that of Laufeld, she had the honour of giving the Marshal's orders pertly from the stage, thus:

'Demain, relâche, cause de bataille; après demain, jour de victoire, on donnera *Le Coq du Village*.'

We can imagine how they laughed at the saucy little minx. Marshal Saxe had a horror of what he called fine ladies, and this active, rollicking, reckless, coarsely witty, saucy little Chantilly was just the kind of creature he admired. She pretended nothing but a desire to please the camp and its commander. She affected no airs of modesty and refinement. She was not at all particular, and, in short, after the foolish fashion of many another actress, she pretended to be a very much worse woman than she really was. The Marshal was enchanted, and his patronage became more and more liberal; he paid the actors out of his own purse; his applause grew louder and louder; his praise constantly grew in fervour; he raised the salary of Mademoiselle Chantilly; and he was more and more frequently in the society of the strollers before and after their performances.

Chantilly had played her part only too well. She had angled for powerful patronage, and with it had caught a lover, a great gilded fish which she was unable to land, which became a terror to her, which drew her ever nearer and nearer to the dreadful depths in which all her best and brightest hopes of happiness were to be drowned, together with those of

poor Charles Favart. She was proud and gratified at first to see so glorious a fish upon her hook, to have this mighty conqueror, this handsome, brave, heroic son of a king, for whose love even royal ladies had intrigued, sighing at her feet—at the feet of a poor little strolling actress, who had neither beauty, rank, nor fame, a plain, shabby, little poverty-stricken woman. What a glorious victory! But now, when her triumph was assured, she was terribly alarmed at it, and went to her lover, weeping and in agony, begging his advice and protection.

He only said, 'We must be married, dear, and at once;' as if marriage would be allowed to stand between the honour of these paltry players and a great man's pleasures. Poor fools!

Favart knew well enough how the Abbé Lorenchet had hired assassins to murder a husband of whose wife he was enamoured. He must have known how his monarch, 'Louis the Well-beloved,' had carried off the daughter of the Sieur Tiercelin, a child of tender years, to place her in infamous hands, and silenced her father's outcry of agony and indignation in the Bastille. Such things were, he knew quite well, common. He had read and knew how true were the bitter satiric words of Montesquieu, who wrote: 'A husband who would wish to keep his wife to himself would be regarded as a disturber of public happiness, and as a madman who should wish to enjoy the light of the sun to the exclusion of other men. Here, the only husbands who are true to their wives are the men who have not sufficient charms to win the hearts of other women.'

One tempestuous night in the May of 1748, during that memor-

able campaign which resulted in the peace of Aix-la-Chapelle, the Marshal was besieging Maestricht, one of the strongest places in Europe. And on that night he was overtaken by a fearful disaster. The swollen waters of the Meuse swept away the bridges, and raged in wild fury, a broad impassable lake of rushing foam, between the Saxon Marshal's French army and the corps of that other great and victorious general Lowendahl, the Dane, upon which the enemy was momentarily expected to advance in overwhelming strength. M. Dumesnil (the handsome Dumesnil) had been unable to rest, and early in the morning he was not surprised to find that Saxe, who often boasted that peril had never robbed him of a single hour's sleep, had, for once, also been unable to close his eyes. He found the herculean gigantic hero pacing his tent in a fever of restlessness, no longer full-fledged with plans and resources, no longer strongly cool, thoughtful, and intensely energetic; but irritable, weak, and despairing, utterly cast down and broken-hearted, ready, apparently, to abandon not only Lowendahl, but his entire army to destruction—actually in tears!

'The disaster must be frightful, indeed; even worse—much worse—than I imagined it was!' thought Dumesnil, and gravely attempted to console him, and, as well as he could, reanimate his courage. He said, 'I am grieved to see you take it to heart so deeply, Marshal; but great as our misfortune is, it is not altogether beyond repair—something can be done.'

'Nothing—nothing!' groaned the prostrated Marshal; 'there is no remedy—no hope; it will ruin me!'

'No—no; surely it is not so bad, Marshal!'

'It is as bad as it can be,

Dumesnil—the worst thing that could happen to me; nothing can retrieve it.'

'But the advantage has not yet been taken. The enemy may not know of it. Lowendahl is a great captain, and the dreadful consequences we apprehend may not—'

'Of what are you talking? What advantage? what enemy? what consequences are you thinking of?'

'The swollen river and the broken bridges; the—'

'Psha! What do I care for them! They are petty inconveniences which a few hours will overcome. They are already dealt with. Mon Dieu—mon Dieu! would to Heaven it were only that!'

Dumesnil in his turn was dismayed. What must that disaster be which could dwarf into insignificance the probable destruction of an entire army? 'I thought,' cried he, 'I had heard the worst!'

Saxe, dashing away his tears, paced to and fro with the fury of a caged wild beast, grinding his teeth. Presently he cried with an oath, 'You do not know what they have done! it is horrible! They have taken Chantilly!'

'Chantilly! Where is Chantilly? Who has taken it?'

The Marshal suddenly stood still. 'It! What do you mean? I was speaking of Chantilly—Mademoiselle Chantilly.' Even then he pronounced her name with tenderness, in a voice that was full of tears.

Dumesnil heaved a sigh of relief, and with difficulty repressed a smile, asking with affected interest, 'When was she taken prisoner?'

'Prisoner!' exclaimed the Marshal quickly; 'who said she had been taken prisoner?'

'You said so yourself, Marshal.'

'I! O, nonsense—nothing of the kind! She has been carried off by my rival, Monsieur Favart.'

'O, I see—the pastrycook!' said Dumesnil somewhat sarcastically, and was glad to escape at once, that he might indulge in the long loud outburst of laughter which he was desperately struggling to avoid.

It was quite true. Favart and his betrothed had stolen away in the midst of the excitement, confusion, and alarm of that fearful storm, risking the dangers, braving the greatest hardships and difficulties, enduring all the fury of the angry elements, to escape from Marshal Saxe, to preserve their happiness and the honour of Mademoiselle Chantilly. How desperate they were that flight fully shows, and by it also we may measure the intensity and sincerity of the passion which united them.

The story of Mdle. Chantilly's flight and the Marshal's tears duly reached Paris. Everybody laughed at it, and it lost nothing by repetition. The idea of a poor ill-made little journeyman pastry-cook carrying off from the arms of this grandly glorious and handsome nobleman, Count Saxe—a king's son, the Marshal of France, and hero of a hundred desperate adventures—a woman he had kindly condescended to make dishonourable proposals to, was irresistibly funny. The idea of a strolling French actress pretending to be virtuous and have honour was even more funny; and funniest of all was the notion of this hardy soldier, who laughed in the face of death, and courted danger with delight, crying like a beaten child for the loss of a trumpery little jade like Chantilly. Paris rang with laughter. Coming from church, the tavern, the gaming-house, or theatre, you heard the

same story, always with laughter. The pathos of it, the tragedy of it, the wickedness and disgrace of it, were as nothing. Paris accepted only the fun of it. It was such an amusing story. It is not so very long since most of us were laughing at it when it was musically and comically told on the boards of a snug little theatre in the Strand, where Miss Florence St. John was Madame Favart.* People took it with their snuff, which they were always taking, and at the famous suppers of the aristocracy they retold it with the very latest additions and improvements. How they roared over it at the Luxembourg! and with what zest it was jested about in the mysterious Petites Maisons, whence the ladies of the court were finally expelled by the courtesans! How merry they were over it at the Palais Royal! A more amusing adventure of 'gallantry'—that was the verbal mask for vice—had not happened for years; they had 'good stories' enough to laugh over—of odious vices, dissolute actions, and scandalous adventure—but this one was so very new and fresh.

The Marshal felt the disgrace of his defeat, and the ridicule it provoked, more keenly than he would have felt the loss of a battle, for the merit of a man of gallantry was in that day and that country estimated by the number of females he dishonoured; and up to that time the Marshal had always been considered as victorious in 'love' as in war. The women wondered at Chantilly's folly; the men could only think of the

* Offenbach's comic opera *Madame Favart* was produced at the Strand Theatre April 12th, 1870, and enjoyed a long run. In it Miss St. John made her first great hit, after long provincial practice, resembling in that respect the heroine she personated.

infinite glory he would have who could achieve over her a conquest in attempting which even Marshal Saxe had failed. Both men and women were hotly curious to see this wonderful little actress, who had fled, it was said, to Lorraine, where she and her journeyman pastrycook had resumed their old life, and were travelling from fair to fair.

Some enterprising manager, I suppose, brought Monsieur and Madame Favart to Paris. Her voice was harsh, thin, and poor; her person unattractive, her acting vulgar; but she was a celebrity, and Paris wanted to see her. The court ladies, who were all in love with Count Saxe, were dying with curiosity to look upon her and hear her voice. She would be a great hit. She was.

It was found, however, that the only characters with which—historically speaking—she could be safely intrusted were those of low life; but in these she was perfectly at home. As a Savoyard girl exhibiting a marmot she proved very taking, and her rustic dance in sabots, and, I presume, the new short petticoats, turned all the male heads in Paris. The nimbleclatter of her wooden shoes, her sly smiles, winks, and glances, the briskness of her movements, the hearty vigour, dash, energy, and agility with which she acted, were all pronounced delightful. The beloved of Marshal Saxe was, there and then, enthusiastically hoisted upon a pinnacle of histrionic glory, from which she has never since descended. The contemptible little stroller has had for more than a century all the glory of a great actress. The whole nation was proud of her—she was French, and she had conquered Marshal Saxe!

Favart was in the seventh heaven of his delight; his glowing

dreams were being rapidly realised; all France was talking about his comic operas, and envying him the love of his wife; all Paris was flocking to see them and her; and they were married at last, were happy, and growing rich.

But the merry comedy was a short one, and the curtain—the dark curtain—was coming down. After the laughter came the tragedy; groans and tears were to follow songs and dancing.

The hero of France, the conqueror of Fontenoy and Laufeldt, was not to be mocked and defied with impunity. Enraged at a resistance and a defeat he had never before experienced, he panted meanly for revenge; and when the war had been carried to its triumphant close, he went to the King, who could deny him nothing, and who merrily enough granted him such a trifling favour as a *lettre de cachet*, to carry off some low-born husband from his low-born wife, and compel her—lucky creature!—to become the Marshal's concubine. So poor poet Favart was seized and locked up in prison, while his wife was placed in, of all places in the world, a religious house—a convent—there to be shut out of the gay world until she would consent to dishonour herself and her husband by becoming what I have not the heart to call her. 'The husband and wife,' says a contemporary, 'were obliged to bend to the yoke of necessity, and little Chantilly was at the same time the wife of Favart and the mistress of Marshal Saxe. . . . And this,' he adds, 'is the government which could expect to maintain itself while indulging in such perversions of power! Strange that Louis XV. should not feel that all such acts of despotism—and they were very numerous—must one day be visited, either

on his own head or on that of his successor?

Perhaps Madame Favart only thought it better to yield and escape confinement for life; or she may have thought of her unhappy husband, and, resolved to play the hypocrite, pretend to grow passionately in love with a man she detested, in the interest of her poor Favart, whose very life was in the Marshal's iron hand. She may indeed have dreamed of vengeance. She might some day induce him to let her lover and husband go. She had great power over their tyrant, and she probably meant to exercise it after a manner which was very womanly and is usually effective. She had but one weapon she could wield, and it was treachery. All she could do in the way of self-sacrifice for the man she had loved, married, and ruined depended upon the influence she could exercise over Marshal Saxe.

After the peace of Aix-la-Chapelle the Marshal retired to Chambord, where the King had given him a magnificent château and park, and there he resided with his famous Hulan regiment and his stud of wild horses, and, after she had endured twelve months' weeping and sighing in her convent cell, with Madame Favart.

Some time after, poor Charles Favart, restored to freedom and fame, joined the Opéra Comique company at the Hôtel Bourgogne, and began to rise rapidly in repute; and not long after, Marshal Saxe fought his last battle with the greatest of all conquerors, Death, and fell to rise no more.

Tourists on the Continent who have visited Strasburg will remember well enough his solemn and stately monument. There it stands in the old Protestant church of St. Thomas. They have seen

in its marble allegory how France struggled with Death for the life of her glorious Saxon hero, and how Hercules himself did what he could, but all in vain. The monument is, by the fate of war, no longer French, but German. It was, however, erected by the monarch Saxe served so faithfully and so successfully, Louis the Well-beloved of France, and is said to be one of Pigalle's noblest works. It is at any rate a more honourable relic of the great soldier than can be found in the story of Madame Favart, who, according to some accounts, more fanciful than real probably, was the cause of his death. Grimm refers to the romantic story, however, as if it were true, and it is strange enough to be so. According to one authority it runs thus: Madame went down into the park to meet, under the cloak of darkness, some unknown lover. The suspicious Marshal stealthily and secretly followed her; a desperate duel ensued, without seconds, and in it Saxe received the wound of which he died. His last desire was that his death should be attributed to any natural cause rather than to the true one, and his physician was sworn to secrecy, lest the wrath of an entire nation might fall upon the head of a woman the dying soldier had already sorely wronged. They gave him a funeral of royal state and grandeur, and amongst the deepest mourners was little Madame Favart, revenged at last.

Grimm says Madame Favart replaced her illustrious lover with 'a little asthmatical abortion called the Abbé de Voisenon,' who had been, or then was, her husband's *ami de la maison*, and who was famous for writing those affected quibbles and fantastic unmeaning conceits which crop up in certain of Favart's numerous works.

Some of these are said to have been partially written by Madame Favart, some of them appeared in foreign languages and on foreign boards, and most of them are still preserved in the 'Répertoire du Théâtre Français.'

Twenty years after the death of Marshal Saxe, Madame Favart bade life adieu. She had suffered long and terribly from some inward complaint, and endured the agony it inflicted with heroic fortitude and patient quietness.

'One day,' says Grimm, 'recovering from a fainting fit in which she had lain for a long time, she perceived amongst those whom her danger had collected in haste about her bed one of her neighbours grotesquely dressed. She smiled, and said she thought she had seen a figure of Death made with straw—a characteristic idea in the thought of a dying actress,' as such figures were then used on the stage.

Those were the days in which priests refused to administer the last sacrament to dying players unless they solemnly and formally renounced their profession; and, in the event of their refusing to save their souls in this way, these

said Christian priests sternly refused to bury their bodies in consecrated earth, to utter prayers for them when dead, or a blessing above their graves. They lived excommunicated, and, dying hopeless, received the burial of a dog, as poor Adrienne Lecouvreur and hundreds of others had. In due time, therefore, the priest, in his customary way, called upon Madame Favart to renounce her accursed calling.

The poor suffering creature was terrified, but said, weeping, she dared not place perjury upon her soul, for if she recovered, necessity would compel her to go back to the stage. But when the clammy drops were on her ghastly brow, and the iciness of death was creeping upward to her heart, she whispered to the priest, 'I do renounce it now,' and died.

Favart survived his wife, and bade the world adieu in 1792, when he was in his eighty-second year, and had been for some time in receipt of a yearly pension of eight hundred francs from the Théâtre Favart, which was erected on the site of the Hôtel de Choiseul in April 1783.

A. H. WALL.

LITTLE COOKS.

SEVEN o'clock on a wet and stormy winter's evening in Liverpool, and my friend M— and I are making our way with difficulty through a crowded noisy street, bright as day with flaring gas-lights. Above our heads the signs creak, and the oilskin suits at the sailors' slop-shops and the pawnbrokers' toss with a fantastic ghastliness, as they are caught by the wind, and on the greasy pavement we are elbowed and jostled by women hastily doing their marketing at repulsive little shops and stalls, or by men lounging out from public-houses or hurrying home after a long day's work. Boys and girls, too, of all ages, swell the throng: some ragged, shoeless, dirty, and either wistful or fierce of face; some neat, alert, stepping along with that self-reliant look which being able to earn one's own bread, and to keep one's self-respect, often gives at such an early age.

It is a noisy crowd, but not a cheerful one; that ludicrously senseless adjective, which stains the speech and must have polluted the imagination of tens of thousands among us, resounds on all sides; there is much loud talking, jangling, and quarrelling in some groups, but little laughing anywhere, and many of the women, bonnetless, with worn shawls over their heads, seem too dispirited even to speak. Little wonder either, for though the rain has stopped for awhile, the wind sweeps down the street in bitter gusts, and it is not a night to tempt out any one who has a shelter, not to say a home.

'We shall get—on better soon,' gasps my companion, between two fierce blasts that nearly tear our cloaks from us; and in a minute or two we turn a corner which takes us at once into shelter, silence, and darkness—darkness only just broken by a few distant gas-lamps. Here the pavement is quite unoccupied, and high blank walls rise on each side of us, speaking of works shut up and quiet for the night, all the tools laid aside, as by and by for a longer night we shall all lay our tools. Now and then the long dark lines are broken by a single cottage, with the firelight gleaming through the window; but the black walls rise high again, and we hurry on till I think the dark street is unending, and begin to feel a little eerie and strange. But my companion stops suddenly before a doorway lit with a single gas jet. 'Here we are at last,' she says cheerily, and knocks with vigorous hand.

The door is opened, but the darkness within is greater than without; we can see nothing. A few steps more, however, and another door admits us into a large schoolroom, where nearly two hundred children, of all ages, and most evidently from the very lowest classes, are busy at lessons.

This is a night ragged school, maintained for the sake of our poor little brothers and sisters by a kind-hearted lady. It has three remarkable regulations, of which two, at least, are much appreciated by the scholars. The children come at five o'clock, and the first of these rules is that every child

must wash its face and hands immediately on arriving; the second rule is that it shall then have a slice of bread and treacle before beginning lessons; and the third rule is that, before going home at eight o'clock, there shall be supper for all. So the faces and hands are fairly clean, though there is apt to be a rim of untouched outer darkness round forehead and cheeks, setting off their whiteness; but the rags, not clothes, filthy beyond description, which hang loosely on most of them, show only too plainly from what wretched homes these little ones come. Most of them are bare-legged, and many a little foot is bound up after a fashion, and many a thin leg shows scars of cuts or burns—the constant accidents that befall these gutter children.

But we only pause to exchange a few words with the pleasant motherly mistress; my friend says, 'They will be ready for us, I think,' and I follow her into a large class-room, where a most savoury odour greets us. Yes, and a very cheerful sight too: a large fire burning clear and bright (a perfect cook's fire), several pots and pans on or beside it, a long table made of boards on trestles set out with various dishes and plates, and, bustling about with eager faces in all the importance and haste of pressing business, a dozen children, six boys and six girls. This is the cooking class.

At one end of the room stands the teacher to keep order, but she takes no part in the work to-night; for this is the 'test lesson,' and the children are cooking unassisted some of the dishes that they have learnt to make, and by and by they are to be questioned on their knowledge. Here no rags are to be seen: boys and

girls alike wear large overalls, lent them for this class; and the keen faces are so clean that they positively shine, and I am not surprised when later a child tells me with conscious and justifiable pride, 'We that learns cooking allus washes in three waters!'

We stand and look on for awhile, noting how briskly and cleverly the children work; but presently we are told that two of them have finished and are ready to be examined; so we take our places at the far end of the room, armed with pencil and paper, and two small urchins come and stand before us. They work in pairs, and are therefore to be examined in pairs.

'Abraham R.; I'm going on eleven, and I'm in the Fourth' (Standard understood), is the reply of the first on being asked his name. 'Tom P., going on twelve,' says, with a cheerful grin, the second, a smaller but bluff and sturdy laddie, 'on'y they calls me the "Doctor."'

Abraham and the Doctor are a very bright couple. A few simple questions about food, its nature, and the different kinds used and required, are asked, and the answers, though couched in rather odd language, show intelligence and real knowledge. Then come questions which they evidently like better, about the ingredients and method of cooking various dishes, and their eagerness is so great that they snatch the words from each other's mouths. Abraham adds to his words a vivid pantomime.

'Yes, teacher, yer takes the flour an' yer puts it in a basin, an' puts the baking powder, an' yer rubs the drippin' wi' the tips o' yer fingers so' (this is the crust for a meat pie, it must be understood). 'Yer mustn't touch it wi' the

rounds o' yer 'ands or it'll get all soft and smoshy—'

Here he pauses for breath, and the Doctor strikes in.

'Yes, teacher, an' when it's all rubbed fine down, yer puts cold water an' stirs it with a knife, an' puts it on a board an' rolls it out—'

'So,' bursts in Abraham again, with pantomime, turning up his sleeves hastily to keep them out of his imaginary flour.

Ingredients, by the way, is a word that has evidently taken hold of Abraham's imagination; he begins his account of every dish as if he were the engineer for a new line of rails, with 'Get all yer gradients.'

These two are soon dismissed—there is no doubt that they have 'passed.' Then come two girls, not quite so brilliant, but still very fair scholars. Then two more boys, one a little solemn-faced Swede, but intelligent and clever enough. Then comes a girl who has not been able to do any cooking to-night, though she is a good worker. 'Her arm is so bad.' Bad indeed, poor child; it is swollen to three times the size of its bony companion. We ask her if she has hurt it, and if she has seen a doctor.

'No,' is her answer to both questions. 'She supposes it's goin' to gather,' she adds, with the dull pathetic patience under the inevitable, that these children of the very poorest so soon learn. Still, she manages to answer a few questions, though they are made mercifully few; and her heavy eyes brighten as she tells us how she stewed a bit of liver 'for father on Sunday, an' he said it was awful good.'

Soon all have passed the ordeal fairly well, but it is curious that, on the whole, the boys have decidedly surpassed the girls. Is it

the novelty that pleases and leads them to care more about it? We have heard a good deal lately of the superior conduct, diligence, and attention of girls attending university classes or residing at colleges, as compared with young men. Can there be any analogy here, or is there any inference to be drawn? Leaving that audacious question alone, there is no doubt that to all the children the cooking is a kind of glorified mud-pie business. Making mud-pies was, doubtless, long one of their pleasures; here they find the very same thing, only with vastly superior materials, legalised, made into a lesson, for which they can even get prizes, and of which (last best thought of all) the results are not only uncommonly good to eat, but are to be eaten by the cooks themselves.

That blissful moment is drawing near. We inspect the dishes, now all neatly set out on the table. Here are lentil soup, Irish stew, stewed liver, treacle-pudding, meat pie, apple pie, all made from the cheapest materials, but all good, besides beef-tea and gruel. The young teacher is deservedly complimented on her pupils, and is informed that they have all passed. She turns and announces the fact to them, telling them that they will all get their certificates, and the whole party break out into shrill cheers. Abraham tries to stand on his head and cheer so, but is promptly turned right side up. A little messenger from the school-room appears to know what they are 'shouting for,' and when she carries back the good news the cheers are loudly echoed. Then comes supper. Grace is said, and the meal begins. Neither manners nor plates are very plentiful, but how they do relish the hot savoury food! Keener enjoyment

it would be hard to see anywhere. An alderman over his turtle, a connoisseur over rare wine, is nothing to it. All that the cooks cannot eat is served round among the others as far as it will go, and the very tiniest mouthful is appreciated. To be in the cooking class is the highest ambition of every child in that school, and no wonder. Soon not a crumb is left; and as we have a train to catch, my friend and I do not wait for the dismissal, but bid the teachers and children good-night, and hurry away with plenty of subjects for thought.

The question quickly rises in the mind, Is not this a move in the right direction? These children do not love dirt, and rags, and bad fare. Can we not, while they are still at school, train them in ways that will make it easier for them to be clean, to be tidy, and to have proper food, at no expense beyond that of the bad unwholesome food common in their homes? None but those who see and know can form the faintest notion of what the food of the working classes too often is—how bad, how wasteful, how extravagant, how unwholesome. The little money they have is ill, because ignorantly, laid out, and the food bought is too often destroyed in the cooking. One cannot help the mothers, except one or two here and there: they do not profit by teaching; but for the children we can surely do something. We must look to the future a little if there is ever to be any improvement.

Let no one suppose that in taking school-time for cooking we are robbing the children of so-called educational advantages. Only get a competent teacher, and a cooking lesson can, and will, be made eminently educational. It can be at once a lesson in arith-

metic, a lesson in geography, a lesson in general knowledge, and a lesson too generally omitted from all time-tables—a lesson in common sense. Tidiness, neatness, and cleanliness are enforced, and the children learn to take a pride in what was at first a trouble, until in many cases their personal appearance distinctly improves while they attend the classes.

And they remember and value what they learn. Again and again, since cooking has been taught in elementary schools, cases have occurred within the personal knowledge of the writer where in sickness a child of ten or twelve has been the only person able to cook for the invalid, or has been obliged and has been able to do all the cooking for a large family. Yes, and to do it better even than the poor mother, who did her best, but, married perhaps from a factory at eighteen, has all her life been struggling under the burden of her own ignorance.

In this generation we have given to girls in all classes opportunities of education such as were never before within their reach; we have improved their mental training in many directions. Do not let us forget that most of the girls in our schools will in time become wives and mothers, and that upon their knowledge or their ignorance of common household matters, may depend the happiness or the misery, the health or the want of health, of a whole family. The Mayor of Liverpool stated at a public meeting two years ago that two-thirds of the quarrels between man and wife that came before him as a magistrate, began in some dispute about food. What a power for good, then, are we placing in a girl's hand when we teach her

how to cook properly! Surely we have wronged our girl-children in so long withholding from them a branch of knowledge quite as important to them in their after life as sewing. Much has been done in teaching domestic economy from books, but a course of practical lessons in cookery teaches a girl far more than a year's lessons from a book. Managers dread the expense, but it seems hardly yet to be generally known that a Government grant of four shillings a head can be obtained for girls learning practical cookery, while the domestic economy grant, also four shillings, can be earned by the same girls. These two grants together more than pay the expense of a course of cooking lessons such as the Code requires; and schemes by which lessons can be given in town or country schools at a very

low rate have been drawn up by various schools of cookery—in particular by the Liverpool School, 59 Parr Street. Full information can be obtained on application to the hon. secretary.

In conclusion, we would urge the consideration of this matter upon all who have the welfare of the toiling millions among us at heart; we would ask help from all who are interested in any degree in education—in the condition of the working classes, especially that of women and children—or, above all, in that great temperance movement, which has made such grand advances in the last five years, and of which the teaching of cooking in elementary schools is, we believe, the humblest, but not the least efficient, handmaid.

AGNES C. MAITLAND.

PLAY AT MONACO.

Ever since Germany found virtue as well as force in union, ever since the ball ceased to roll at Wiesbaden, and messieurs to make their game at Homburg, the gambler has no place wherein to enjoy the 'two greatest pleasures of life,' between Heligoland and Monaco. Where Heligoland may be, few people—and probably no Frenchmen—know; but the climate is believed not to be attractive in winter. So the tide of rascality rolls southwards to the 'gem-like' city, as Mr. Tennyson calls it, of Monaco; and the trains from Marseilles to Nice carry a mixed multitude of gamblers and invalids.

Monaco has always been the devil's corner of the Riviera, the 'goodman's croft,' as north-country peasants called the fallow nook of their farms where the enemy was supposed to sow tares and wild oats, and practise the rest of his wicked husbandry. Long ago, looking along the bright coast, past dull Hyères, and Cannes with its one black unsavoury street, past dusty sunny Nice to beautiful Mentone, the purveyor of mischief for idle hands chose out for his own the city on the rock above the sea. In old days the place pleased him well, for it lay in a no-man's lawless land, between Provence and Genoa and Savoy, while its natural strength and sheltered harbour made it a home for sea-robbers. There the Saracen cruisers lay in wait, and thence the pirate princes of the ancient house of the Grimaldi, when they had driven out the Saracens in

the tenth century, preyed on the commerce of the Mediterranean, and lent their fleet indifferently to the Emperor or the Pope. Now the navies of the Prince are fishing-boats, but his Mayors of the Palace—the Administration—sit at home, to accept the challenge of all comers from the idle watering-places on the languid coast. Trains run all day from Nice, conveying troops of the knights of industry, with their ladies; and steamers used to ply in the season, though few brought back gold from this shady Ophir.

Nor is the *caurien* alone there, for respectability too takes its return ticket from Nice or Mentone on the eastern side, to the Casino at Monte Carlo. This is little to be wondered at, for, with all its beauty, the Riviera is not exactly a lively place. Mosquitoes, and your own or your neighbour's cough, keep you pretty alert at night, but it is not so easy to be awake all day. Some people are not ill enough, or wise enough, to wish to bask for ever on the beach, or 'to walk all day, like the sultan of old, in the gardens of spice,' of lemons, and cassia round the hotels. They have exhausted the fun of *le tir aux pigeons*—white and sagacious doves with the wisdom of the serpent, which won't get up when the trap is pulled, but need to have pinecones thrown at them, and then walk back to the sportsmen. Tennis, too, on curious grounds innocent of a blade of grass, soon ceases to have charms, and it is rarely that any one twice trusts himself to the mercies of a local

hack. Sainte-Beuve's modest prayer, that he 'might do something every morning, and go out somewhere every evening,' cannot be gratified here. Even the rain of England, mitigated as it is by clubs and conversation, begins to seem preferable to the monotonous blue sky and sunshine that would be so invaluable in a British cricket season. So some fine morning most people find themselves taking gold in their pockets, and their places for Monaco, merely, of course, to listen to the very admirable band, and to study the curious types of character. Let us go with them, careful to be supplied with return tickets, and as little money as possible, for certainly it will be deposited for ever in the bank at Monaco.

Leaving Nice, the train strolls in a leisurely way over a number of very perilous bridges, past the height of Cimiez, with the pensions and amphitheatres, the marks of the old Roman and of the new English occupation; past the pretty bay of Villafranca, where the treaty was signed that gave Nice and Savoy to France, and where the American squadron is lying now, with dance-music echoing from one of the ships; past little stations with Saracen names and clumps of feathery palms, till we pause under a great cliff. The cliff, with the olive groves at its feet, is to the left; to the right is the sea, and a castle on a crag, with aloes peeping over the round walls, and one great sentinel cypress. Lemon groves run down almost to the beach; the red soil breaks through here and there; the smoke floats away from a white cottage among the olive-trees; behind are the rocks, with beautiful faint colours, yellows and reds, as of the dawn. It is like the Garden of the Hesperides, as Mr. Morris has enabled us all to see it:

'The well-filled golden cups of oranges,
Hung amid groves of pointed cypress-
trees;
On grassy slopes the twining vine boughs
grew,
And hoary olives 'twixt far mountains
blue;
And many-coloured flowers, like a cloud,
The rugged southern cliffs did softly
shroud.'

This earthly paradise is Monaco, and we alight at the little station under the castle. The Casino is a mile further on, but it is best to climb the path to the old town, for the day is long enough to inspect the whole principality, 'from the Alps to the sea,' as well as to examine the late M. Blanc's house of custom.

A winding path leads easily to the summit of the rock whence the Genoese, with their scaling-ladders, were hurled long ago; and, before we expect it, the 'unhappy palace of the race' of Grimaldi is before us. It is a long, dull Italian building, of the desolate sort called fine, on one side of a bare stone square, with six stunted plane-trees. Three soldiers in the faded blue of Monaco are swaggering beneath the flag, the flag that, with its quarterings, has a kind of shadowy resemblance to the cloth of a roulette table. The old cannons on the ramparts were a regal present from France. They are covered with fleur-de-lis, but have no carriages, and would scarcely serve to frighten an *émeute* of Monacese. Within the palace are frescoes by Caravaggio, which have recently been very much restored. Here, too, Duke Lucien was stabbed by Doria and by 'an assassin from San Remo,' while a black servant looked on, frightened and helpless. The place brings back a memory of Holyrood, of Stirling, of all the desolate boudoirs of old palaces with stained floors, and no fragrance now but that evil one, the memory of blood shed in vain.

In the great crimson and gold chamber of state a very different person died more peacefully, the Duke of York, brother of George III. He fell ill between Marseilles and Genoa, and a curious story is told of the last hours of this not very romantic prince. A beautiful lady stood gazing at the palace from the shore all the days of his illness, and leaped into the sea at the hour of his death. From the parapet of the castle you see the rock from which she plunged, and the place is haunted, of course, by this *sirène*, or lady of the water. From the same parapet Duke Hercules IV. was thrown by his subjects, on a November night of 1614; the prince, who was a renowned warrior, being equally famous for his love adventures in times of peace. The fall must be over one hundred feet, and there are reefs below shining through the clear green sea.

In the garden-paths leading to the town, and blazing with roses and geraniums in December, pretty dark children are running home from school. The town is clean enough and quaint, with houses painted with odd devices. Times are changed since Duke Honorius and Duke Florestan (1815-1848) made education impossible, corn a monopoly, and the life of the people worse than that of Egyptian fellahs, with their extortions. Monaco, with Mentone, shared in the revolution of 1848, and now only the town and about three miles of coast are under the dominion of the Duke. Within his bounds, however, he has all the rights of an absolute sovereign, and the *Journal de Monaco* proclaims his clemency in pardoning a criminal condemned to perpetual labour.

Leaving the town, a walk of ten minutes takes us to Monte Carlo,

whereon the Casino is built, with its terraced gardens, forming, with a café and the Hôtel de Paris, three sides of a quadrangle. The hotel, a building in the most Parisian taste, is perhaps the most comfortable on the Mediterranean. But it is not exactly intended for families, and if you stay there without playing you are informed that a Russian prince has applied for your room, thinking the number a lucky one. Indeed, Monaco differs from its German rivals in nothing more than this, that respectable people will not make it their home, and thus the Administration is spared the expense of contributing to an English church.

Do not let us be seduced by the metallic chink of coin that comes from the windows of the rooms; these are not in their glory till gaslight. Look straight up the mountain: on the very crest of the steep is what seems like a gaunt pillar of living rock. That is a Roman trophy of victory over the Alpine tribes, and behind lies Turbia, the old frontier town between the two Gauls. Through deep green lemon groves, lit up with golden fruit—through gray olive gardens, up to real turf, so rare on the parched coast—the path leads to the basis of the limestone cliffs. Then come stairs cut in the rock, and, after a breathless scramble, we are in Turbia. The Corniche Road, and the world on its way, go past this lost-looking village, with its steep lanes, its Gothic gates, its narrow streets, with green and mouldy walls, dark under the overhanging eaves. No one is about but children, and stray donkeys of a small black breed, which walk with the *aplomb* of sacred animals, Irish pigs, or Egyptian ibises. Through the west gate and past the ruined tower is a strange dull sunset brooding over a glorious panorama.

To the west, where the light is clearest, is the fantastic line of the Estrelles, with reaches of golden water rippling at its base, and crowned with a soft and golden fire, like the 'bonny hills of heaven,' in the old ballad. Between that headland and Turbia the Mediterranean breaks into its 'innumerable laughter.' Far to the north, beneath the chilliest part of the sky, are the tumbled lower spurs of the Maritime Alps, cold and blue beneath their white crest of snow. To the east are the hills above Mentone—Italian hills, violet dark between the 'daffodil sky' and the blue-green sea. At our feet, as it seems within a stone-throw, the pretty 'city of little Monaco basking glows.' The sun goes down, and the chill and dew come on with the swift night. It is a quick rough walk to Monte Carlo through the soft gray and purple of the twilight.

From the night air and the cold to the light and heat of the *salon de jeu* is a curious change. The rooms at Monaco are two, built in the shape of a T, and contain six roulette and two trente et quarante tables. The latter game is at first sight a little mysterious. The table is divided into two compartments, one marked with a red lozenge, the other with a plain lozenge, of the same green baize as the board. If you put your money on the red side, you bet that the upper of two rows of cards, dealt by a croupier, will pass thirty-one by fewer pips than the lower, which is called black, but might as well be called yellow or by any other name. Roulette is more childish still. A ball is sent revolving round a revolving disk; it must ultimately fall into one of thirty-seven chambers, each numbered, and each coloured either black or

red. The table is marked with corresponding numbers and colours. If you are fortunate enough to put your stake on the actual number which turns up, you receive thirty-five times your stake; eight times your stake if you back four numbers, one of which turns up; twice your stake if you back one of the 'columns' of twelve numbers, and so on. Roulette has larger prizes than the rival game; but whenever the ball falls into number 0, called zero, the bank clears the board; and zero occurs very often.

The usual crowd surrounds the tables. Here is the professional gambler, with his impassive face, rough German or smooth Spanish. Here are ladies from Nice; their coquetry deserts them when they take their seats, which is saying a good deal. Here are elderly Britons straight from the concert-rooms, with the obvious impression that they are Dautes in a new Inferno; one young English lady has the air of a pretty pitying Beatrice. They are haunted by the fear that some one will shoot himself, and suppose that charcoal-pans are among the articles of the tariff in the Hôtel de Paris. Nothing of the sort happens, however. You see no sign of emotion, except a quivering hand or lip, or a very lowly-muttered execration. Play is rather an opiate than a stimulant, for the gambler's mind is all in the future, hanging on the next deal or the next circle of the ball, till the fatal one, when he is ruined, and walks out to realise it. Thus the humours of a gambling-table are as rare as those of a mathematical lecture. Odd people enough are here, but they don't behave oddly. There is an old lady who looks respectability itself; yet she is placing her coin on the roulette-table with the sci-

entific calm of a person who is making tea.

Now she stakes on a column, now on a colour, now on a number, and 'the numbers come,' and the old lady wins. 'Zero,' calls the croupier, and the bank sweeps up a few five-franc pieces. But that sagacious old woman has a napoleon on zero, receives thirty-five times her stake, and toddles away before luck turns. Watch that old Scotch gentleman with his wife and daughter. He puts down, he actually hazards a crown on the red. Red comes up. With joy and surprise he turns to the family group. 'I never made a bet before,' he cries, 'and I've won.' Even as he speaks, Mdlle. Mussette, of Nice, has added the two pieces to her humble store, nor will French, spoken with a wondrous Edinburgh accent, induce her to restore them. There is a Frenchman playing on a system. That young man might much better be occupied with the search for perpetual motion or the squaring of the circle. Systems are like the alchemy of M. Théophile Gautier's inventive friend.

'Gold!' said this genius. 'I have made gold; any one can do it. But it takes forty francs to make a napoleon.'

In the long-run, the bank and a constant player of even temper and boundless wealth would be equal, save the three per cent the

bank would win by zero. Alas, when the player has no temper, and only the money he meant for his tour as resources! One man will cover the table with gold, and be wrong everywhere; another will let a coin lie where it falls, and receive thirty-five times his stake. So various is Luck, which is only constant to her hatred of the timid player. So we punt and moralise, and the last of our napoleons has gone on the wrong 'column.' We shall not make a fortune by roulette, *non Di, non homines, non concessere columnas*. Perhaps it is as well. Beginners win, they say; the patron saint of Monaco generally takes care of that. Then they long for more, as the girl in Miss Rossetti's poem yearned for more of the fruits she bought from the goblin merchantmen. People return again and again after their first success, all in vain. The croupiers are as cruel as the goblins, and rake your gold back into their glittering tempting fairy hoard.

There is the whistle of the train from Genoa, Nicewards, and the low moon is shining through the feathery palms, and over the smooth sea, as we run down to the station. It is rather a depressed crowd that separates at Nice, and little inclined to waken the echoes and the invalids with 'Rule Britannia' or the 'Marseillaise.'

A. L.

COLLECTORS AND THEIR 'HOBBIES.'

I HAVE often wondered why the authors of those ingenious little manuals, bearing the attractive titles of 'Physiologies,' 'Natural Histories,' and so forth, and descriptive of sundry social types more or less remarkable for eccentricity, have most unaccountably omitted to include therein a definition of the genus 'collector,' a subject rich in varieties, and embracing an infinitely wider field than unreflecting folks are apt to imagine; for who, at one epoch of his life or another, has not succumbed to the 'soft impeachment' of the collecting mania? Fortunately for the peace of mind of those absorbed by this very prevalent infirmity, it is sufficiently elastic to enable them to cultivate their own particular hobby without necessarily interfering with each other; the favourite specialty patronised by one individual being not unfrequently 'leather and prunella' to his brother collector, and *vice versa*. Were it otherwise, and did everybody tread the same path, the demand would have long since exhausted the supply, and, as a natural consequence, this paper would never have been written.

Few people, I should think, would feel disposed to question the utility of public collections, or indorse the disparaging remark of that eminently practical philosopher William Cobbett, of whom it is recorded, on the authority of the political caricaturist H. B., that, when inspecting the Elgin marbles, he contemptuously observed that he saw no use in such things, and that the stones would

be better employed in building a wall round his cabbage garden. These, moreover, independently of their artistic value, possess the advantage of being national property, and are, therefore, exempt from possible dispersion; whereas it may reasonably be doubted whether those formed by private individuals have an equal chance of surviving their owners. It rarely happens—except in the case of family heirlooms, which are generally inalienable—that what has been regarded by its original possessor as a lasting memorial—*are perennius*—of his perseverance is appreciated in like manner by those who come after him; by them it is simply looked upon as an investment, whether profitable or not can only be ascertained when it is brought under the hammer. By this summary process two objects are attained—namely, the realisation by the heirs of a more or less satisfactory windfall, and the acquisition of long-coveted articles by rival collectors, probably destined in their turn to undergo a similar treatment at the hands of their successors, and unconsciously to provide a future percentage for the officiating auctioneer.

It does not, however, follow that all collections are remunerative, nor is it safe to assume that what is eagerly sought for to-day will be equally in demand a year or two hence; popular taste is essentially variable, and, in accordance with the whim of the moment, adopts 'everything by starts, and nothing long.' Much also depends on the tact and acu-

men of the original purchaser, and on the judicious outlay of his money; and I recollect a case in point. A clever art-connoisseur in Paris was in the habit of frequenting the studios of young and as yet unknown painters, and of investing small sums in the acquisition of whatever pictures or sketches he considered indicative of promise, stowing them carefully away on the chance of the future celebrity of his *protégés*. By this means he succeeded in amassing little by little a quantity of specimens, many of which, so correct was his estimate of their merits, proved ultimately of such value that the ingenious speculator not only made his fortune, but also enjoyed for the rest of his life the reputation of a liberal and enlightened patron of the arts. On the other hand—for there are two sides to every question—the biographer of the actor Charles Kean expressly warns his readers against the folly of book-collecting, his argument being that he himself, on the sale of his library, had realised barely half the amount it had originally cost him. This statement, however, would rather tend to show that in his selection of books the writer must either have been singularly unfortunate, or have paid an exorbitant price for them; so disastrous a result being by no means of common occurrence, and denoting a lamentable want of judgment on the part of the purchaser.

It would be an endless task to attempt any enumeration of the various 'hobbies' indulged in by collectors, for they are legion, including almost everything, and ranging from such ambitious specialties as etchings by Rembrandt and *pâte tendre* down to the modest desiderata, chiefly affected by votaries of tender age, of postage-stamps and monograms. With some the 'fad' is of short

duration, with others permanent. Nor are examples wanting of capriciously inclined individuals who, like the 'floaters' of bubble companies, perpetually essay new ventures, and abandon them as rapidly for something that promises better. I once knew a specimen of this class, who never by any chance remained constant to the same pursuit for more than six months, deserting one for another as soon as the novelty wore off, and recklessly disposing of his discarded treasures for what they would fetch. The last time I heard of him he had just consigned his entire picture-gallery to the auction-room, and was preparing a raid on Elzevirs and early printed books, which will probably find their way thither before the year is out. It is needless to add that this species of collector is highly popular with the fraternity of dealers, his ardour, while the fit is on him, never flagging for a moment, and gold melting in his hand like snow in June. Such weathercocks, however, can only be regarded as exceptions to the general rule, and I merely allude to them *pour mémoire*.

In my younger days it was the fashion at Eton to devote a considerable amount of time, which might assuredly have been more profitably employed, to the acquisition of these now obsolete sign-manuals called 'franks,' our ambition being to collect as many signatures of peers and members of Parliament as by hook or by crook we could possibly obtain. I often wonder if any of my surviving contemporaries still remember the ingenious devices imagined by us for the furtherance of this object: how, under the secure incognito of assumed names, we audaciously pestered lords and commons, even the great Duke

himself (who, contrary to his usual habit, never answered), and astounded the clerks of the Windsor and Slough post-offices by the frequency of our visits, and by the pile of letters, each bearing the more or less legible autograph of some patrician or political notability, almost invariably awaiting our arrival. Most of our correspondents were sufficiently endowed with the milk of human kindness to pardon our presumption, and spare us one of the ten 'franks' a day they were privileged to sign; but now and then we met with a snub, and I particularly recollect a well-meant but somewhat long-winded rebuke administered by a venerable dignitary of the Church to one of my colleagues on the sinfulness of wasting time in so frivolous a manner, which, I have reason to fear, the recipient hardly appreciated as it deserved. Not all our ingenuity, however, succeeded in eliciting a reply from the then renowned 'Liberator,' Daniel O'Connell. He was deaf to our most eloquent appeals, and although—for the Conservative element was strongly represented among us—we professed but little sympathy with his projects for regenerating the Sister Isle, yet, such was the rarity of his signature that, as a matter of exchange and barter, it was worth more than those of any dozen of our legislators put together.

I have known in my time a very considerable number of autograph collectors—English and foreign—and have myself occasionally yielded to the seductions of this fascinating, but by no means inexpensive, 'hobby,' the spread of which, and the consequent rise in value of good specimens, have of late years so prodigiously increased as to render it almost inaccessible to prudential

buyers. Even ladies have caught the infection, although, as far as financial expenditure is concerned, they 'do their spiriting gently,' and wisely prefer the more congenial method of augmenting their store by personal solicitation, which costs them nothing, and answers their purpose equally well. One of these, a neophyte in such matters, having started an album in accordance with the prevailing fashion, presented the splendidly-bound volume to a certain literary magnate, and requested him to enrich it with his autograph: 'I only make one stipulation,' she added, with a bewitching smile—'it must be in *your own handwriting*!'

Every one has heard of La-blache's famous collection of snuff-boxes, which realised a large sum when dispersed after his death; but how it was originally formed is not so generally known. Donizetti happening one day to question him on the subject, the inimitable *basso* replied that he owed its commencement entirely to the liberality of the Emperor of Austria. 'On my first visit to Vienna,' he said, 'I had the honour of receiving from his Imperial Majesty a very handsome *tabatière* set with diamonds, a rather unusual mark of favour, the news of which soon transpired through a great part of Germany. As I was then on the point of undertaking a professional tour in that country, the sovereigns of several smaller courts apparently considered it incumbent on them to follow the Emperor's example; so that, by the time I had completed my engagements, I already possessed nearly a dozen snuff-boxes of more or less value, which gave me the idea of continuing the collection on my own account. Fortunately for me, they did not take it into their heads to decorate

me with orders instead, for then, out of respect, I should have felt it my duty to wear them; and you know, *caro mio*, he added, with an irresistible twinkle of his eye, 'Nature has been so singularly bountiful to me, that I am conspicuous enough without them!'

Some collectors have strange fancies, as, for instance, the gentleman who amused himself in his rambles through the streets of London by purchasing a single specimen of every article sold by itinerant vendors for a penny. In the course of time, as I have been told, he had amassed an immense quantity of miscellaneous trifles, which turned out to be a most profitable investment; for, when eventually submitted to the chances of the auction-room, they realised at the very lowest computation several hundred per cent on the original outlay. Still more lucky was the beleaguered resident in Paris during the siege and Commune, who utilised his leisure hours—and they were many—by gathering together everything in the shape of political squib, placard, and caricature published from the first investment of the city by the Germans to its occupation by the Versailles army, and stowing them carefully in hole and corner until he had an opportunity of transporting them safely across the Channel to one of our most frequented sale-rooms, where, after a keen competition, they were disposed of for a very considerable sum.

The late eminent statesman, M. Thiers, was for some years an enthusiastic print-collector, the *école gracieuse* of the eighteenth century, and more particularly the works of Watteau and Lancret being the objects of his search. I have often seen him in the Rue Drouot of an afternoon, either inspecting the art-treasures 'on

view,' or energetically holding his own against a rival amateur bold enough to dispute with him the possession of a 'lot' equally coveted by both; and I remember how on one occasion, a difference of opinion having arisen between him and a well-known *curieux*, as to whether a print exposed for sale was in the first or second state, the latter, losing his temper in the discussion, tartly observed, 'En matière d'estampes, Monsieur Thiers, je suis plus fin connaisseur que vous.' 'Non,' coolly retorted the future President of the Republic, staring at the other through his spectacles: 'vous ne l'êtes pas, ou vous ne l'auriez pas dit!'

I once knew an individual, whom I cannot more accurately describe than as a 'philanthropic' collector, his sole motive in laying out his money in what Mr. Wemmick calls 'portable property' being that of benefiting his fellow-creatures by distributing his acquisitions among them. Had he confined his investments to objects of real utility, nothing could have been more praiseworthy; unfortunately, he had a mania for wholesale purchases, embracing every variety of miscellaneous articles, picked up at cheap sales, and of no earthly value, financial or artistic, whatever. These he stored up in cupboards until a fitting opportunity occurred of disseminating them as birthday gifts or wedding presents, the recipients of his *largesse*, chiefly his own lady relatives and connections, being not only expected to accept them with becoming gratitude, but also to express their admiration of pinchbeck jewelry, or huge flaring vases of imitation china that would have disgraced the chimney-piece of a lodging-house.

While on the subject of eccentric collectors, I cannot avoid

incidentally alluding to that unfortunate class of beings afflicted with the deplorable malady of illegitimately appropriating whatever they can lay their hands on, of which category old Lady Cork was so notorious an example. Perhaps the most ludicrous of her ladyship's freaks was the surreptitious carrying off of a hedgehog from a friend's house, as recounted by Mrs. Kemble in her delightful *Records*, and her subsequent exchange of the prickly beast for a pound cake with a confiding baker, who was assured that it would be invaluable to him as a destroyer of beetles, with which his establishment must necessarily swarm. She had a parallel in Paris, in the person of the wife of a celebrated dramatic composer, whose favourite victim was a bookseller occupying a shop in the Passage de l'Opéra, immediately adjoining the Rue le Pelletier. Thither she betook herself frequently of an evening, armed with a muff or handbag, according to the season, and, under pretence of inspecting the latest literary novelties, invariably slipped a volume or two into the receptacle prepared for them, and walked quietly away in the most unconscious manner possible. The bookseller, who knew her well, far from interfering with her little game, contented himself with keeping a sharp eye on her from his place at the counter, while his assistant acted as sentinel inside the shop. After her departure, the extent of her depredations having been easily verified, the bill for them was made out forthwith, sent in to her husband next morning, and paid, as the dealer

jubilantly remarked, '*rubis sur l'ongle*.'

An old friend of mine, in his day an ardent disciple of the collecting mania, lately wrote to me, regretting that age and infirmity had forced him to relinquish his researches, and adding, '*Je ne fais plus collection que de rides et de cheveux blancs*.' This is, unhappily, what we must all come to; but while the capacity to enjoy it lasts, the 'hobby' is assuredly a most attractive one. It may, however, be safely affirmed that, whatever a man's *penchant* may be, whether he goes into ecstasies over an immaculate Queen Anne's shilling, or triumphantly exhibits the signature of Grolier or Derome on a masterpiece of binding, he will invariably maintain that the particular specialty cultivated by himself is the only rational one, all others being an indefensible waste of time and money.

One variety of the genus I have omitted to mention—I was about to say forgotten, but the expression would have been manifestly inappropriate, inasmuch as, when once people have made acquaintance with the personage in question, he never allows them to forget him. He is not by any means a popular character; his visits are returned grudgingly, and I may add irregularly; nor is there any possibility of getting rid of him, for he is insensible to rebuff, and will inevitably recall himself to the most rebellious memory at least once a year. And yet, such is the infirmity of human nature, how few are there who appreciate the punctuality and perseverance of the *tax-collector*!

CHARLES HERVEY.